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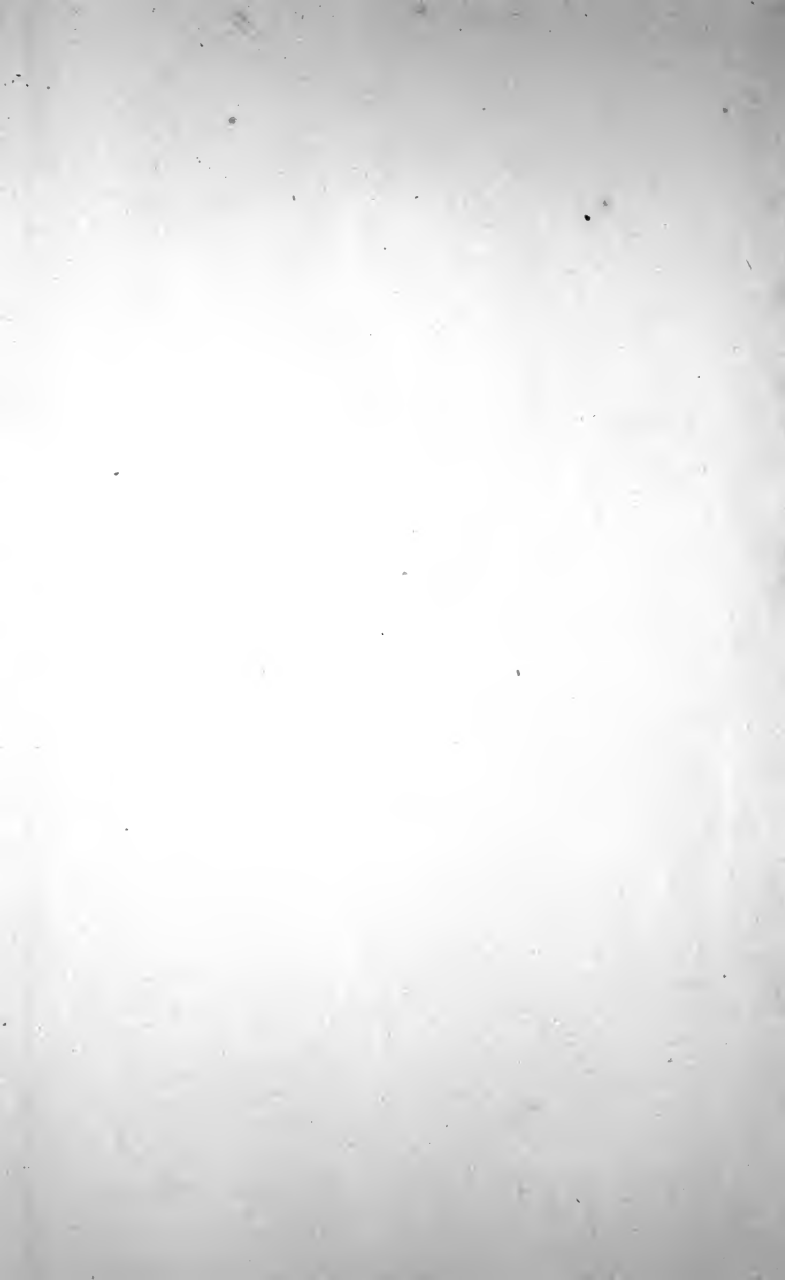
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LOVE — OR A NAME

A Story

BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE

AUTHOR OF "FORTUNE'S FOOL," "BEATRIX RANDOLPH," ETC.



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1885

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LOVE — OR A NAME



LOVE—OR A NAME.



CHAPTER I.

WARREN BELL.

WARREN BELL, though not more than twenty-five or six years old, had already trained himself to observe certain rules of conduct, one of which was, before embarking upon an adventure to find out all he could about it. This was the more creditable to him because he was by nature impetuous and sudden. When he was quite a small boy he had been prone to wild outbursts of passion in which he became uncontrollable. In the midst of one of these paroxysms his father caught him up, as he was raging and tearing on the floor, and put him on the mantel-piece. The mantel-piece was of an old-fashioned design, five feet above the floor, and scarce as many inches wide. It was a ticklish place to balance one's self on at the best of times, but as a stage

for a boy of six to kick out his frenzy in it was acutely dangerous ; and Warren had sense enough left to understand it. By an effort that brought out a cold sweat on his heated skin he controlled himself, and stood bolt upright and perfectly still, — except that the thumping of his heart shook him a little. His father said : —

“ That proves you can behave yourself if you choose to. Mind I never catch you in a rage again ! ”

Warren stood there for an hour and thought it over. Then his father took him down, and his mother caressed and comforted him. But he never forgot the insight into himself which the incident had given him. His passions and impulses were strong ; but, if he chose, he was stronger. And for the most part — though with certain important exceptions, as we shall see — he did so choose, in the future.

In accordance with his acquired habit of looking ahead, instead of first jumping, Warren Bell had studied the railway time-table in New York before taking the Down-East train ; and he had found that he would have to wait nearly four hours at Pinetree Junction. He was still too young to believe that

he could afford time to wait anywhere, and certainly not four hours at Pinetree Junction, of all places in the world. Meditating upon the matter, therefore, he made up his mind to make the distance from the Junction to Hickory on foot. It was not more than sixteen miles, and three years ago a tramp like that had been nothing to Warren Bell. The road was familiar to him from of old, and, if he compassed the journey even in four hours, he would gain nearly a fourth of that time upon the train. Besides, although the month was early May, — and spring in New England has acquired a bad name, — it happened on this occasion to be very fine weather. The air was cool but soft, the morning sun was bright, the sky was pale at the horizon and blue in the zenith, and the youthful sap was flowing in every tree and plant, and in the veins of every rightly constituted human being as well. It was just the day for a walk; and, moreover, Warren had an idea that the exercise would help him to turn thoroughly over in his mind the several aspects of the errand on which he was revisiting the home of his boyhood.

Accordingly, when he reached Pinetree Junction, he left directions with the elderly and rheumatic personage who, with a three-days' beard on his meagre jaws, a black coat that had become greenish

about the shoulders, and a pessimistic eye, performed the duties of station-master, ticket-seller, railway-gate-lifter, and baggage-smasher, to forward his trunk to Hickory by the next opportunity; while he himself stretched his legs, buttoned up his coat, grasped his cane, and prepared for his journey.

"Aint your name Bell?" demanded the elderly factotum, not looking at the person he was addressing, but at right angles away from him.

"Yes; and you are Major Witherbee, aren't you?"

"Well, I guess everybody knows who I am. Le's see, — father's dead, aint he?"

"Three years ago, — before I went to New York."

"Mother, too?"

"Yes, long ago."

"Air you coming back here to live?"

"No; I'm coming to a funeral."

"Whose funeral's that?" inquired the Major, with a show of interest.

"Mrs. Anthony."

"Oh! she! Dead, eh? Le's see; got a daughter, aint she?"

"I suppose so: she used to have when I was a boy."

"Guess you were sweet on her, too, wa'n't you?"

"If I had been I shouldn't tell you about it, Major."

"Well, I guess now's the time to take her, if she'll have you," the Major rejoined; "but if the funeral's all you want, 'taint no concern of mine." With this he hobbled away, and Warren Bell, with a glance at his watch and a half-annoyed smile on his lips, stepped off lightly along the narrow brown road.

He was not above five feet nine in height, and was compactly but not heavily made, — a handsome, active figure. He walked easily, with a long step and head up; and he twirled his cane in his right hand, like one familiar with quarter-staff play. He was not comely of feature, but his face had a pleasant, genuine look, and withal was full of purpose. There was also about him an air of refreshing cleanliness. I do not mean as to his clothes, though his linen was white and fine, and his garments fitted him neatly; nor as to his person, though his skin was bright and wholesome, and the nails of his hands carefully groomed. It was something in the human and mental atmosphere of the man. It appeared in his voice, in his bearing, in his smile, in the manner of his speech. There were no mephitic or stagnant

regions in his nature. He had two physical defects, both of which aided this agreeable impression. He was near-sighted, in the first place, and wore eye-glasses. But when he was interested in talk (as he generally was), the eye-glasses dropped down, and the eyes were half closed, and took on a sort of absorbed or rapt expression, as if he saw the thing he spoke of, and were blind to everything else. Anon he would turn them upon his interlocutor, bending forward with a concentrated intentness of gaze that made you feel you had been looked into. His other defect was a tendency to stammer. This had been very marked in his boyhood, but he had realized its inconvenience, and had set himself with all his might to correct it. He had so nearly succeeded in this effort that nothing now remained but an occasional straining at the leash, as it were, before the utterance of a word, which then came out with an emphasis, and with a resolute thrusting forward of the chin, that were stimulating and captivating. You were certain that he believed what he said; and this disposed you to believe in it likewise. Wonderful is the influence of a man who has an actual belief in anything, even if it be only in himself! He magnetizes and enchants the negative and neutral-tinted mass of his fellows.

The infirmity of such men often is that they are as fickle as they are earnest. They see and feel with such vividness that they do not see and feel the same thing long. In the course of a lifetime they will pass through a complete circle of opinions and practices, each one of which, nevertheless, appears to be the direct logical outcome of the preceding one. Such men are dangerous to conservative institutions, and subversive of the calculations of political economists and statisticians; but, if it were not for them, the world would soon cease to revolve, and hang idly on its axis. They are more at home in this country than in Europe; but, for that very reason, they are perhaps more useful in Europe than they are here.

Warren Bell walked swiftly along, enjoying the pure air, the soft tints of spring, and the freedom from noise and clatter which is so noticeable to those who live in cities, — not to mention a twelve hours' journey by rail. Enjoyable to him, too, were the familiar turns of the road and features of the landscape, associated as they were with so many episodes of unforgotten boyish adventure. He had fished in that river, skated on that pond, shot a hawk on yonder hill, picked cranberries in this meadow, and gathered huckleberries and blackberries on the past-

ure above. Against this reality of memory the more recent reality of his city life seemed fantastic and unsubstantial. The natural creature in him expanded and exulted, and recognized the restraints of civilization. He wanted once more to wade midleg deep in the black mud of a meadow brook, and catch turtles. He longed to shin up a tall pine-tree, tearing his trousers, scratching his hands, losing his hat, and smearing himself all over with black resin. He would have liked to sprawl half the morning under an alder-bush, listening to the bobolinks and the larks. Manhood, with its obligations and ambitions, hampered him. Oh, for the days when he was four or five feet high, in a jacket and trousers, and in a world twenty miles in diameter !

No ; time is inexorable, for it is the shadow of the soul's development.

So, in a grave mood, Warren Bell fell to thinking over the course of his past life, — than which employment none is at once more fascinating and more pathetic. The way is marked with gravestones, under which lie buried friends, hopes, illusions, innocence, opportunities. He was a boy as afore-said, rejoicing in the exhilaration of healthy life, loving his father and mother, forming imperishable

friendships with other boys, whose names he had now forgotten, hating school, rejoicing in the freedom of Saturdays, chafing under the restraint of Sundays, running and shouting himself into glorious exhaustion at hockey, football and baseball ; secretly thinking that there was something divinely lovely about little Nell Anthony, and, for that reason, avoiding her as sedulously as if she were a pestilence ; stuffing himself with strawberries in June, with watermelons in August, and with apples in autumn ; intending to be a mighty hunter when he grew up, and kill grizzly bears in California, jaguars in Brazil, tigers in India, and lions in Africa, and, meanwhile, actually shooting chipmunks on his native rail-fences, — in short, being such a boy as only an impetuous and imaginative boy in the country can be. Next he saw himself a youth in college, measuring himself against other youths, and agreeably disappointed to find himself less inferior than he had expected ; planning gigantic feats of scholarship, and partaking of stentorian debates and bewildering punches in the Greek-letter secret fraternity ; suspended for a year by a tyrannous and unprogressive faculty for neglect of college duties and riotous behavior in the town streets, studying prodigiously during his exile, and coming back to pass a trium-

phant examination, graduating tenth in the list of scholars and first in the hearts of his classmates; and corresponding with tolerably regularity and profound secrecy with the princess of his heart, who was Nell Anthony still. Then a year at an engineering academy, immured in descriptive geometry, integral calculus, isometrical and perspective drawing, plotting and surveying, and dreams of becoming a second Watt or Winans. After that, two years' rough practical work in the field, building railroads, digging canals, designing bridges; finally interrupted by the death of his father (his mother had died during his college career) and a return home to settle up his affairs there, and to wonder what should happen next. What did happen was, by the instrumentality of a powerful friend in New York, his summons to that city to act as assistant engineer in the Hydrographic Department, in which position he had prospered greatly, and had learned something of the world, and had had glimpses of avenues to higher things, not essentially connected with engineering, such as had stirred in him springs of ambition that had till now been latent. It was then that Warren Bell discovered, for the first time, how ambitious a man he was.

But what had become of sweet Nell Anthony all

this while? Was she forgotten? There can be no doubt that a man grows more in the five or six years after he leaves college than in all the time before, assuming, of course, that he has brains and ambition, and that he gets out into the world. And to grow, in this sense, means to discover the disproportion between the known and the possible. Later, perhaps, there may come a wisdom which finds all the possible in the known. That wisdom was not Warren Bell's as yet. Be that as it may, however, he had travelled from New York to Hickory not only to attend the funeral of Nell's mother, but, also, to satisfy his conscience by asking Nell herself to be his wife.

CHAPTER II.

NELL ANTHONY.

COULD that dreary slavery called women's rights ever be put into practical operation the world would soon become too business-like to think of love and marriage. Woman is the conservative of the human race ; she is the centripetal, as man is the centrifugal, force. If she did not stay at home and mind her own affairs home would cease to exist. Man, in that case, would do well to exterminate the female half of creation off the face of the earth, as merely a feebler and frailer imitation of himself, and then die with the consoling consciousness of having done one good deed.

Nothing is more certain, however, than that women are not and never will be such fools as some few of themselves, and quite as many forlorn nondescripts of our own sex, would like to persuade them that they are. It is the dictum of a very modern school of thinkers that everything is relative. This means, if it means anything, that the scale of progression is infinite. But, this being admitted, of what use is it

to go to London or to the North Pole, or, for that matter, to Jupiter and the Pleiades, in search of information and culture? Everything is still relative, and you know no more, measured by the infinite standard, than does the countrified provincial who has stayed at home. What is more important is that you have put yourself out of the way of knowing several valuable things which only staying at home could have taught you, — or into which, at all events, all your foreign education (when the chaff is shaken out of it) must resolve itself. The world can teach a man a great many facts about himself and others; but of wisdom it can never teach him so much as the alphabet; that belongs to an altogether different plane of experience.

Nell Anthony had never been twenty miles beyond the boundaries of her native village. Why should she? She lived in a comfortable old house, built in the massive and generous style of a hundred and fifty years ago, with a great fragrant barn close by, on the other side of an ample and populous farm-yard. The country side had a quiet but unfailing picturesqueness; it was not so striking as to become wearisome, nor so featureless as to be tame. A range of mountainous hills in the western background sent down long spurs and green ridges into

the immediate vicinity of the village ; and eastwards, a dozen miles away, might be seen on clear days the blue levels of the ocean. The vale in which the village stood was fair and fertile ; a stream, which in England might have been called a river, wandered through it, full of perch, bream, and pickerel in summer, and in winter overflowing and freezing for the benefit of skaters. The broad village street, half-a-mile in length, with shops at one end and private houses at the other, was lined with remarkably tall and handsome trees, the preponderance among which of hickories had perhaps given the village its name. The inhabitants of this somewhat remote settlement had not run to seed quite so much as is apt to be the case in little-known and antique New England towns. They were mostly farmers, who sent the surplus of their produce to the cities, thereby paying their expenses and a little more, and lived upon the remainder. There were a few old mariners, or their descendants, who had made some money in foreign trade ; but these also owned land, and kept cattle and poultry. Many of the middle-aged or older men had been to the war, though, except for the military handles still applied to their names, you might not have suspected it. There were two or three families to whom was tacitly accorded

the title of the aristocrats of the community, — not on account of their wealth, which was not much above the village average, nor because they put on airs of superiority, for they were conscientiously public-spirited and democratic; but from some vaguely defined, inwardly recognized solidity of character, flavor of manners, and old-time identification with the town's history. Of society in the conventional or technical sense of the term, a stranger might have failed to discover any traces; and yet all the inhabitants of Hickory knew and understood one another, and contrived to profit by one another's company in their own way and manner. They met at church, and at the lyceum, and on occasions of political interest; and then there were weddings, funerals, bible-classes, an evening party or hop now and then, and in the late summer and autumn a picnic or two in the woods, or down on the seashore. Nobody with any claims to decency and respectability was ostracized from such gatherings; the young man who cleaned out the inn stable might dance in the town-hall with the daughter of the judge, if he were in a fit moral and physical condition to do so; and no doubt he regarded her with quite as much respect and delicacy as would have been manifested towards her by the foremost dandy

of the Royal Horse Guards in London. But the attitude towards one another, in an American village, of youth and maiden, young and old, gentle and simple, learned and illiterate, is quite unintelligible if not inconceivable to those who have had no personal experience thereof; it exists, but does not lend itself to explanation. Theoretically it is utterly subversive of reason and order; but practically it is as wholesome and prosperous a system as human ingenuity has yet devised. If you are content to dispense with what it cannot give you, you will find what it does give you unexceptionable.

Of course a number of enterprising or good-for-nothing young fellows, every year, made up their minds that Hickory was not good enough for them, and betook themselves out of it, Hickory, for its part, accepting their departure philosophically. More rarely a Hickory girl would marry somebody who had not been a Hickory boy, and so disappear beyond the village horizon; but these were exceptions. As a rule Hickory was contented with and stuck by itself. And as for Nell Anthony she had never happened seriously to contemplate any future for herself of which Hickory did not form a part. She was not given to wandering thoughts of any kind. She had been a happy and healthy child,

pleased with everything, and never crying for the moon. She had grown up into an undemonstrative, straightforward, sweet-tempered girl, with a certain unobtrusive strength and warmth in her character, which, for the present, emphasized and defined the impression she made, but which, under due stress of circumstances, might have developed and kindled into a quite unsuspected power. Meanwhile, Nell Anthony, like all people who are willing to make themselves useful, found herself serving a great many uses; but, such was the secret energy of her temperament, she never found herself overburdened. She did things easily because she attended to them in the doing. When she made bread she thought of the bread, and not of the fashion of her next dress, or of her partner at the last dance. She lived and had her being in the present, which, for a girl of rather unusual intelligence, as she was, evinced a remarkable serenity of spirit. Beasts of the field have this peculiarity, because their perceptions are so limited; angels of heaven also have it, probably, because their perceptions are so profound. Nell Anthony was neither an angel nor a beast; but she was a young woman whose heart was in the right place, and whose mind had never as yet been out of accord with her emotions.

Her father, one of the leading citizens of Hickory, and fifth in descent from the original settler, had served in the war, and had received a wound at Antietam, from the effects of which he died a year afterwards. Nell was then a child of thirteen; she had no brothers or sisters, for a little brother had died at birth, and Mrs. Anthony had ever since been more or less of an invalid. There was a farm to be looked after and a household to be managed, and, since Mrs. Anthony was quite broken down by her husband's death, Nell took the reins in her small hands. Always observant of what was before her she was already familiar with the detail of farm and house work, and, the faculty of causation being well developed in her, she divined enough of the theory. Finally, being active and practical, she did no small share of the work herself. She milked the cows, made the butter, looked after the hens, kept an eye on the kitchen-garden, made the bread (as has been already intimated), and kept the house in order from top to bottom. The things which she was physically incapable of doing herself were done under her direction; and her "help" both out door and in, recognized the simple authority and sagacity of the little thing, and carried out her commands willingly and effectively. She had not the air of

being older than her years, but she was equal to her emergencies. Amidst all her active employments she found time to study her lessons and to read in her father's library. Her invalid mother never had a day's anxiety either about her or about the house and farm. So the child grew up into young-womanhood wholesomely, busily, and serenely, and without the least self-consciousness. If she had contemplated her own actions at all, she would only have seen that they were the natural expression of her character, — there was no sense of duty in them.

When she was eighteen, having learned all that the Hickory schools could teach her, as well as a good deal more that is unfortunately not taught in schools, she devoted several hours a day to being a teacher herself. To be a country school-marm is not captivating to the imagination; but as Nell Anthony did it for love, and was never strenuous about discipline, she made no ungainly figure at it. As to discipline, it came of itself; the children felt the order that was in her mind, and, probably because they loved her, endeavored to imitate her in this as in other things. Besides, she did not teach them arithmetic and spelling; she let their poor little brains as much as possible alone, and applied herself to their imagination and their emotions. She read

fairly-stories and poetry to them, and in other ways led them to feel the difference between truth and fact, between outside and inside, between the temporary and the permanent. It was all Greek to the school committee; but Nell Anthony's motives and character being above suspicion, and the children seeming to get good rather than harm from it, — and no expense to the exchequer being involved, — they let her have her way. Indeed, everybody let her have her own way, not because she insisted upon having it, but because she so evidently knew what her way was. There is no power in the world so effective as personal power, because only a stronger personal power can resist it.

And is this all there is to tell about Nell Anthony? For that matter not much can be told about any body or thing. Action is solid, narrative is linear, says Carlyle; and narrative's only chance is in stimulating the imaginative sympathy of the reader. Would that every writer had the skill to avoid the explicit and to cultivate the suggestive! However, Nell's secret has already been partly betrayed, and nothing can be gained by concealing the rest. Warren Bell had been her first playmate, and at all times, whenever she might have thought of herself, she did think of him. He had never told her that

he loved her, though he had often told himself so ; she had never told herself that she loved him, but love him she did. She was not in the habit of thinking about her feelings, and giving them names ; when the feeling came it justified and explained itself. This dialectician's distinction between object and subject is unknown and impossible to true emotion : object and subject are one ; so Nell would not have put it that she loved Warren, but rather that her love was — Warren. She disappeared entirely from her own sight, and only he remained, transfigured.

Of course she had only arrived at a certain phase of the passion ; but it was the ideal phase. It was love before incarnation, with the heavenly light and aroma about it. It may ultimately reach a yet higher stage, — just as a man who has lived and suffered and overcome attains to a loftier purity and deeper innocence than the infant can claim ; but, meanwhile, every step seems a step downward. Of course, too, we are speaking here of love, and not of the bookish and bloodless sentiment which commonly passes by that name. So it was, at all events, that Nell Anthony had never troubled herself to speculate as to whether Warren Bell loved her ; nor had she ever thought of jealousy. Such considerations belong to the earth, and her love had

not yet touched that level. It was a deep, secret, silent happiness to her, an inspiration and a benediction, — something, indeed, too sacred for public discussion. He had written her many letters, which she had read and kept; but it was not what he wrote that she cared for in them, — she cared for them because they were written by him. She had written to him in answer; what she told him was the simplest record of her daily life, — and of the outward life, not the inward; but the thought that she was telling it to him gave to the words a consecration and a joy; and they came from as deep a place in her heart as if they had been the choicest and most emphatic utterance of unbridled infatuation. Such was the sum of her love-history so far; and she had never dreamed of its going any farther.

Of late Warren had been receding farther and farther into a world of which she knew nothing; but he was no farther from her heart than ever. She did not need to look for him; she felt him there. The sudden sinking of her mother, like a figure of snow melting all at once in the spring rain and sunshine, brought a sense of profound solemnity, which made that other figure seem clearer and nearer, instead of dimming it; for, even then, she could not think of herself at all.

CHAPTER III.

THEY MEET.

A BELT of woodland lay to the south of Hickory, and approached within a mile or two of the outskirts of the village. It covered one of the last low spurs of the western hills, subsiding towards the ocean. Ridges of granite peeped here and there through the soil, in the crevices of which innumerable columbines grew and nodded their flushed heads; and may-flowers, anemone, lady's slipper, and rhodora, each in their season, made the place beautiful. Here, too, were the best huckleberries and blueberries; and in autumn, ripe nuts came rattling down from the trees. It had been a favorite spot with Warren in his boyhood; and, either by chance, or from some obscure appreciation of its sylvan charm, the Hickory farmers had spared its trees and flowers, and it remained inviolate and just as he remembered it. The road passed through the midst of it, the trees flung their boughs across the way, and the soft sunshine struggled down between the new green foliage. The birds were singing as if

each one of them had to express the whole of nature in music. And, midway in a sunny and shadowy glade, Warren saw a woman, walking slowly before him with flowers in her hand.

He did not need a second glance to recognize that figure, — not too tall, not too slender, with head serenely poised, and firm, rhythmical step. He quickened his pace. His foot made no sound on the softened surface of the road ; but, before he was within fifty yards of her, she turned slowly, saw him coming, and stood still.

He came up rapidly, took her hand, and looked at her intently, before either of them spoke. She was pale, and her eyes seemed larger than usual under her dark, straight brows ; but her red lips met each other with the same quiet composure as ever, neither smiling nor drooping.

"So you are here," she said after a moment.

"Not too late, I hope," answered he.

"It is this afternoon."

"I am glad we met here."

"I came out for some flowers ; she liked these spring flowers. How lovely the day is ! The earth seems all tender. And you have left all your business, Warren ?"

"My business ? This is it ; you are alone now,

Nell ; who should be with you if I am not ? I could do nothing else but come."

She paused a little, and then said, " I have not felt alone ; but I suppose I am."

They began to walk onward together. Warren had something to say — something that he had come to say ; but it seemed better to postpone it for the present. The girl was evidently preoccupied with the scenes and thoughts of the last few days, and would scarcely be ready yet to hear him. Moreover, now that he was by her side, he felt that he must find other words, and in another manner, than he had anticipated. He had forgotten how reserved and undemonstrative she was. If he wished to succeed he must shape his request heedfully. He did wish to succeed ; but for her sake rather than his own. He fully believed that she cared for him, and he knew there had been a time when she was to him the most desirable object in the world. That time had now passed, though he had never told her so, nor meant that she should ever know it. Indeed, he did not (he thought) love her less ; but other things had become more absorbing to him. What had seemed to be love three years ago, now, in the opening out of a wider life and a higher ambition, was seen to be friendly affection merely. Nell Anthony

would still have remained the sole goddess of his worship had he remained in Hickory, and never developed the qualities and capacities, and acquired the knowledge which made him what he now was. This simple country life, with its peace, its monotony, its tameness, its limitations, was the life for which a country girl like her was naturally fitted ; but, as his partner in the career which he saw opening before him, she could scarcely fail to be somewhat out of place. Nevertheless, his conscience would not permit him to put her aside on that account. Though he had never asked her in set terms to be his wife, he knew that he had at one time hoped to make her so ; he believed that she had understood and returned his love ; that for his sake she had forborne to admit any other man to her regard, and that, in her quiet constancy, she would never dream that he could change. At this time, too, when she stood solitary in the world, it would be even dastardly to desert her. To a man like Warren Bell, his word was as good as his bond, and an understanding as good as his word.

There was no other woman in the case. Nell Anthony had no human rival, — unless it were that figure of Warren Bell himself, rich, honored, powerful, distinguished, which he saw before him in the

future. He believed that he had work to do in the world, that his country would know him and remember him, that he would leave his country's affairs in a condition more prosperous than he found them. But the achievement of this object would require all his energies; and to give hostages to fortune at the outset was poor policy. He must neglect either his wife or his ambition, unless he could find a wife who would promote his ambition, and that, he felt sure, was not to be expected of Nell. Her idea of ambition would be to nurse and rear her children, to keep her house neat, and to fill her husband's heart. It was a woman's ambition, and there was none purer or better; but Warren feared that he could not help her to realize it, any more than she could stimulate him. Yet duty enjoined that he should try.

For the moment, however, he put the subject aside, and talked with her about her mother, and about the general state of affairs in Hickory. But as her ears seemed to be more awake than her tongue, it happened that most of the talking was done by him; and so it was also natural that, after a while, he should come to speak more of his own affairs than of hers.

"When I first went to New York," he said, "I

had no notion what would come of it. I understood the work, of course, and I found no difficulty in managing the men. That's unlike the other part of the business, — it comes by nature, or not at all. But for g-getting on, it's worth the other ten times over."

"What sort of men?" inquired Nell.

"Irishmen, to begin with. But when the people in authority see what you can do they increase your responsibilities. I began with four Paddies, and now I'm third in command under the chief, and have control of the whole hydrographic survey. I sit in my office, and issue orders. And I've got an insight into how things are worked."

"Are they not worked right?"

"N-not to my thinking. But you wouldn't understand; New York is not like Hickory."

"But isn't there more good there, as well as more bad?"

"You have to hunt for the good; but the bad h-hunts you. Nothing moves without politics, and politics means getting money without working for it, — or at any rate, without producing anything of public use. This is the way of it: the public pays money to have things done, and the politicians take the money, and d-dont do the things."

"Why does the public let the politicians be where the money is?"

"That's just the point, Nell. Unless you're a scamp, and get rich by politics, politics will make you poor. Now, you see, honest men with families to support must follow an honest business that pays them; they can't afford to be politicians: it would cost them either their money or their reputation. The consequence is, of course, that politics are managed by dishonest men. And that isn't the worst of it."

"It must stifle you," said she, drawing a long breath.

"It would stifle you; but I mean to s-stifle it. The worst of it is, that all public concerns, and a great many private ones, are run by political cliques. That means that the men chosen to do a piece of work are appointed and paid by politicians; and, in order to keep their places, they must vote for the reëlection of their masters. A man who connives at swindlers soon becomes a swindler himself. They call it standing by one another, and make it out a code of honor. So the whole thing is rotten through and through."

"Can you make it pure again, Warren?"

"I believe I can; I'm going to give all that's in

me to trying. I've got the honesty and I've got the brains; and I need only one thing, — that's money."

"That is a pity."

"Hard work in my profession will give me money, in time. And when I have the sinews of war, my own sinews will do the rest. But I must be independent, above all things, or it's no use."

"Certainly, New York is not like Hickory," said Nell, musingly.

"I long to be at them!" exclaimed Warren Bell, grasping his stick and shaking it. "I wish I were free — with a million of my own. I hate every year's delay — and every d-day! Twenty-six is none too young to begin such a work as that."

Nell Anthony looked at him and wished that she could help him. That was all she wished; and she said nothing.

By this time they had emerged from the wood, and were passing down the low uplands towards the village. When Warren saw the familiar houses, white and gray, with the trees rising above them, and the little river winding through, he wondered for a moment whether he were not a fool. Was this the first age that evil had been known in the world? Was he the first reformer who had sworn

to set it right? Was there any greater happiness than to enjoy a quiet home, lovely children, a loving wife? Why should he ever return to New York? Why should he not remain forever here?

"Nell," he said, taking her hand, and bringing her face to face with him, "before we go farther, I want to ask you a question."

She looked up at him, still with one hand in his, and holding her flowers in the other.

"I have been thinking of it for a long time," he went on. "It was one reason of my coming here. We have known each other all our lives. I have known no woman so well as I've known you, — I've never wished to. My life, since I became a man, has not left me much chance for society, — it has been hard work among men. But when I was a boy at college, I used to think that you must be my wife. And now — if you care for me enough — the time has come. You are alone in the world, and so am I. Let us live together from this time forth. Every day, when my work is over, I will come home to you, and" —

Nell Anthony withdrew her hand.

"You should not have spoken of this," said she, meeting his eyes gravely. "You don't need me, Warren; and I don't" — she paused — "need you,

any more than I have you already. I am not alone ; I am content. And how can you feel alone, with your work and your hopes ? I've never thought of marriage, and I don't want to think of it. That is not what I was meant for ; and I — we should not help each other so."

"I have spoken at the wrong time," replied he ; "but don't say that I've spoken wrongly. It's no time to ask you over your dear m-mother's grave, but" —

"Yes ; that was the time to ask me, if you must ask at all," she interrupted. "Since she died, my mind has been clear, and I see — I know. I can make no mistake now."

"I thought you l-loved me," said he.

"So I do, Warren," she answered, in a fainter voice ; "but not in that way."

There was a pause.

"Nell," he exclaimed, suddenly, "if you say so, I'll give up New York and come and live with you here !"

Her cheeks flushed slowly. "I do not love you in that way," she repeated.

There was nothing more to be said. He had satisfied his conscience. But though his conscience was satisfied, another voice began to murmur doubt-

fully in Warren Bell's heart. It was too late, however ; he saw his life before him, and she was not to be there. They walked onwards towards the village in silence.

CHAPTER IV.

THEY PART.

THE funeral procession moved to the burial-ground, beneath the pines, — a link in that procession that will never end while the world lasts. The village folk followed, as a matter of course and of courtesy, and also of curiosity, — for death has remained a riddle all these years, and we are never tired of looking for some chance glimpse of the answer. The crowd gathered about the grave, some with their hats off, others, farther away, chatting with one another, with here and there a laugh partly suppressed. The women pressed the closest to the centre of interest, and seemed the most affected; and all their eyes were bent on Nell Anthony. She stood close beside the oblong hole in the earth, looking downwards meditatively, as her habit was, but without apparently perceiving what was actually before her. Her faculty of living in the present had come to an end. Now, like the rest of the world, she must find her being in the past and the future, — less in the future than in the past.

Death is often the beginning of a new life for those who are left, as well as for those who go. Her mother's death left Nell Anthony outwardly serene, because the springs of emotion it moved were so profound and so unselfish. Something else had also died to her, and was being buried, — not with her mother's body, but in a deeper grave. And it was the loss of this thing that had given her the first consciousness of its existence.

Warren Bell stood on the other side of the grave, and looked across at the quiet, young figure with the dark dress and veil. The grave was between them; but it was not the grave that had parted them. Her answer to his question had taken him by surprise; and this fact might itself have suggested to him why the answer had been what it was. But he had not the tact to perceive his blunder, if he had made one, and, what is more to the point, the result, though surprising, was not unwelcome.

At least, he had been telling himself for the last few days that, if he made Nell his wife, it would be more for her sake than for his own; and for her to decline his proposals was, therefore, a gain and not a loss to him. And yet, such is the perversity of human nature, he could have found more arguments in favor of the marriage now than ever before. But

that matter was settled, and could not be again discussed. Nell's refusal had been firm and distinct; and there was no reason, that he could imagine, why she should have said one thing and desired another.

When the two Irishmen in attendance, with their brown arms bared to the elbow, began to fill up the grave, the crowd moved away and dispersed village-wards, but Nell and Warren remained behind a while and then set out together. The sun was within an hour of setting; it had been a perfect day.

"It's sad to think of you living on here, with no one who belongs to you," said he.

"I have my school," she answered. "I have my mother, too, though I can't do anything for her any longer. And I shall like to think of you succeeding in New York."

"Do you mean to stay here always?"

"It makes no difference to me where I go, if I don't go where I am not wanted. I have made no plans. If I find nothing more to do here, or if I find something better to do somewhere else, I shall go."

"Look here, Nell; y-you've got enough to live on, haven't you? — because " —

"Oh, yes! much more than I need. I think I must be rich."

"Then I can do nothing for you," said Warren, a little dejectedly.

She stopped in her walk, and gave him a long look.

"Don't think I didn't understand," she said. "You have done more for me than I ever expected you to do; and more than any one will ever do again."

Warren Bell left for New York that night, and was at his office the next afternoon. After looking over his reports and arranging the work for the next day, he shut up his desk and went out. He was out of spirits and not in a good humor.

As he walked up Broadway, with his head bent, and swinging his cane moodily, some one came up behind him and tapped him on the right shoulder. He turned his head, but saw no one; and at the same moment a hand was slipped under his left arm, and the new-comer laughed in his ear.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said, brusquely. "What the d-devil do you want?"

"I want to give you the straight tip, old man; and I guess a straight nip wouldn't do you any

harm, into the bargain. Been investing in Erie? Stop in here, and I'll set 'em up. Come — no nonsense! I've got news for you."

They entered the lobby of the Metropolitan, and passed through to the bar.

The young gentleman who stood treat was a very dapper and prosperous-looking figure. He was barely of the middle height, and must have been considerably under thirty years of age. His clothes were new, and of expensive materials, and fitted him to a nicety; and there was a tendency to venturesomeness in the pattern of his trousers and the immaculateness of his neck-scarf. His face, of a narrow oval, was lighted by a pair of quick and rather small eyes, and emphasized by a rather large nose. His expression was knowing, self-confident, and jaunty; a trifle more of the latter element would have made him look like a rowdy. His silk beaver was polished to perfection, a gold seal ring adorned the little finger of his left hand, and below his three-button coat there was a glimpse of a thick gold watch-chain. As he stood, with his feet apart, and his hands behind him holding a slender bamboo cane, it was noticeable that the calves of his well-rounded legs had a salient curve, as if he were double-jointed at the knees. His lips were inclined

to thickness, but his mouth was small ; and at this moment there was a chew of tobacco inside of it. He was a man whose livelihood depended upon three things : native sagacity, other people's ignorance of the money-market, and luck. He was a member of the New York Stock Exchange, and his name was Tom Peekskill.

"What'll it be?" said Mr. Peekskill.

"Vermouth for me," replied Warren Bell.

"I should think so, by the looks of you, — wormwood, with a dash of gall in it. Say, old man, what ails you? Has your gal gone back on you?"

"Let's have our drinks, and b-be off," exclaimed the other. "I'm busy. You should have picked up somebody who was more in your line."

"Jim," said Mr. Peekskill, with a nod of recognition to the self-possessed young gentleman with smooth blonde hair and a white jacket, who approached, sliding a napkin along the bar, "a vermouth and a sour, please ; and shake her up, there's a good boy. Say, old man," he continued, turning to his companion, "where've you been, anyhow? Say, old Drayton's been asking after you, and he gave me a message, if I should see you."

"What is it?"

"Wants you round to feed with him to-night. I'm on to it, too. We'll go together."

"No we w-won't. I can't go; I'm busy."

"Busy? What's business? If old Drayton aint business, I don't know what is. And he means it, too. Say, brace up!"

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Well, I can guess what o'clock it is. Drayton, you know — ah! all right, Jim. Here's success to crime!"

He swallowed the contents of his glass, and replaced it on the counter.

"Have another?"

"No."

"Cigar?"

"I've got 'em," said Warren, taking a couple from his waistcoat pocket. They walked to the cigar-stand and lighted up. "Well, I'm off," Warren added.

"Hold on! What ails you? It aint five o'clock yet, and we dine at 6.30. Come and sit down while I tell you" —

"Talk as we go along, then. I tell you, dinners are not in my line. I have something to do to-night, and I want to be home early."

Seeing that he could not prevail upon his friend to be reasonable, Tom Peekskill followed him to

the street, and resumed the conversation as they walked northwards.

"The thing is this way, as I figure it out," said he. "Old Drayton is in on the new water-works scheme, but of course he can't show, because he's chairman of the Compensation Fund, and there'd be a row. But it's being chairman, you see, that gives him the pull. That pack of thieves on the other side think he's solid with them, and they spread their cards right out in front of him. It's head he wins, tails they lose."

"He might be in a better business," said Warren. "Why don't he tell 'em how he stands, and clear out? Fight 'em with c-clean weapons, I say!"

"Say, old man, that's all right," returned Tom Peekskill, smiling good-humoredly, "and I respect you for it. But just take a case and see how it looks. Suppose you were cashier of a bank, and one evening you were going round with a gang of fellows, and they were to propose to rob that bank, — not knowing you were connected with it, you see, — would you stop and listen to their plan, and so be ready to tackle them when they came; or would you turn round and say, 'I'm in charge of that safe, gentlemen, and the less you talk before me, the better it'll be for you?' Well, that's just

about the way it is with Old Drayton. He thinks that the best way to keep scamps in order is to preside at their deliberations, and, when the time comes, pull the drop and let 'em through; and it's my opinion that his head's level."

"That's not the whole story. He's after money just as much as they are; and it's because he expects to make more by retaining the chairmanship than by resigning it that he stays."

"Well, now, I guess you're beyond me. I know what Drayton says, and what he does; but I will admit that I never looked inside him and saw the wheels going round in his soul. Say, old man, aren't you coming it rather strong? or are you up to the mind-reading racket?"

"No; I'm wrong, and I spoke without thinking. If Drayton isn't an honest man, I don't know who is. But I don't like his position all the same."

"A man like Drayton's got to have some position; and wherever you see ten men together in this city you can take it even that there's one rascal among 'em. However, you and he can have that out together this evening; it's none of my funeral. But he's going to have half-a-dozen of the head men in the affair at dinner to-night, and we're going to draw up an outline of the whole scheme. It's a dead secret,

of course ; and when the big gun goes off we can quote our shares at about any figure we choose. In two years from now we ought to average a million apiece, easy."

"Who are the men?" asked Warren.

"Drayton and you and me are three. Then there's Callby, and Wiston, and Sprayne, and probably O'Ryan. That's the gang. And Miss Lizzie will shine upon us until the coffee is served and give us a good send-off. Well, here goes for the El. Half-past six, mind, — and don't miss the clams!"

With this injunction Tom Peekskill strutted off down Fourteenth street, and Warren Bell, left alone, continued his way up-town, looking more moody than ever.

CHAPTER V.

SETH DRAYTON.

MR. DRAYTON was a New Englander by birth, — the representative of an eminently respectable Boston family. In his youth he had been a college classmate of the father of Warren Bell, and the two had begun a friendship which continued in moderate but constant force up to the time of the latter's death. When the war broke out, Franklin Bell volunteered, raised a company, and went to the front as its captain. Seth Drayton, who had all his life had an obscure tendency to heart-disease, which became more pronounced at about this juncture, was disabled thereby from taking an active part in the field; but he did what he could. He was connected with a wholesale cloth-manufacturing business, and he furnished our regiments with the best quality of cloth that was served out during the war. All his contracts were punctually and honorably filled. Some of the purveyors of "shoddy" may have made money faster than he; but, in the long run, the reputation that he created redounded to his own profit as well as to the benefit

of the soldiers. At the end of the war his fortune was very large, — so large that he felt justified in retiring from business. Indeed, you would hardly have supposed, to look at him, that he had ever been a business man. His aspect was both imposing and refined, — a tall, massive personage, with a high white forehead, and a grave, handsome face. He had kept up to an extent unusual for an American the classical studies for which he had been distinguished in college; his acquaintance with English literature was wide and scholarly; and he was something of a connoisseur in art. Though he was not known to have made any contributions to literature himself, it was felt that a man whose conversation was so cultured and discriminating might easily have obtained eminence in that direction had he chosen to seek it. He partly compensated, however, for his abstinence with the pen by his eloquence on the platform. He had the gift of thinking on his feet; and his thoughts were always orthodox in quality and graceful in form. At the war-meetings he had spoken frequently and effectively; and when peace reigned again he was often prevailed upon to address cultivated audiences on topics of social interest, — such as the enfranchisement of women, the diffusion of education, the labor-problem, and free-trade and

protection. In a word, he was well fitted to be a type of the aristocracy and elegance of the intellectual centre of our Republic.

Mr. Drayton married a charming and accomplished Boston lady, and built himself a handsome house on the new land, which became a favorite resort of New England culture and fashion. But, even had the company been absent, you could have spent many a pleasant hour in examining the treasures of art and literature which adorned his rooms. Besides an undoubted Botticelli and a highly probable Palma Vecchio, he possessed rare examples of Millet, Corôt, Gerôme, and Meissonier, a small Reynolds, an oil head by Hogarth, of himself, half-a-dozen first-rate impressions of etchings by Rembrandt, a tiny water-color ascribed to Turner, a pen-and-ink sketch by Thackeray, with a verse of doggerel attached, a bronze pitcher, with figures in high relief, believed to be the design of Benvenuto Cellini. Of books he owned a large and costly collection, including a number of first editions of English classics, and many admirable examples of the matchless work of the great bookbinders. There was a copy of Milton which had belonged to Coleridge, with his annotations enriching every page; and a volume of Thucydides, with Shelley's name on the fly-leaf. There

was an elaborately carved cabinet of black teak, containing, among other things, two jars of hawthorn-blue porcelain eight inches high, and worth their fill of gold dollars, an incredibly-wrought ivory nest of balls from China, a crystal sphere from Japan, and a set of chessmen in gold enamel, exquisitely finished, and disposed upon a board composed of alternate squares of gold and ebony. But it would be impossible to enumerate even the leading features of a collection like Mr. Drayton's. His wife's refined taste enhanced its value by the charm of judicious arrangement; so that you seemed rather to discover these beautiful and interesting objects than to have them obtruded upon you. The whole interior of the house was attuned to a quiet, harmonious key; it reminded you of some of the best English interiors — if, indeed, it were not more or less directly modelled after that prototype. There was a superficial soberness and simplicity, developing upon examination into elaborate richness. Altogether, it formed an admirable frame for the impressive figure of its owner, who, in the daytime, lounged gracefully about in a velvet coat and cap and Turkish slippers, disguising his real dignity under an apparently careless ease, and in the evening was the model of the courteous and accomplished host, whose faultless

attire and manners seemed rather a homage to his guests than a glorification of himself. He was a most enjoyable dinner-table companion, not only because his gastronomical education was so refined, but because he had an unfailing flow of genial chat and anecdote, interspersed with gleams of pleasant humor, which made the hours sparkle as they passed. Happy must have been the wife of such a husband and the mistress of such a home ! But Mrs. Drayton was a slender and fragile woman, with an apparently hereditary disposition to thoughtfulness and melancholy ; so that she acted as a gentle foil to her husband's good humor, instead of as a sunny reflection of it. Howbeit, their marriage felicity was not destined to over-long continuance. A few years after presenting Mr. Drayton with a daughter, Mrs. Drayton died ; and then, for a season, the beautiful house on the new land was wrapped in silence and mourning.

Upon emerging from his seclusion Mr. Drayton betrayed the severity of his loss by seeking the distraction of a more active life. He entered the legislature of his native State, and it was generally expected that he would become a leading figure in it. But the career of politics in this age and country does not always reflect the true measure of a man's

worth. The competition is too keen at times for the frailty of human nature, and great gifts and lofty purposes will sometimes fail to win for their owner the honor and advancement which he deserves. After making all allowances, however, it was a matter of surprise and indignation to Mr. Drayton's friends that he should have been thwarted and misrepresented to the degree he was in his efforts towards reforming and elevating the tone of political life, and, in order to silence once for all his ungenerous rivals, he was urged to accept the nomination for governorship. He consented. The canvass was exceedingly bitter, and was prosecuted on both sides with unusual energy. Mr. Drayton was now for the first time made sensible of the lengths to which partisan spite will go. His "record" was assailed in the most cruel and vindictive spirit. He was charged with disloyalty to his country in her time of need, with coining gold out of her heart's blood, with personal cowardice, with double-dealing, with time-serving, with hypocrisy. Nay, the privacy of his domestic life was violated, and he was actually accused of having hastened the death of his wife by behavior and practices which it is needless to specify here. We all know what such charges, made in the heat of a vehemently contested

election, amount to ; but their baselessness is, unfortunately, no measure of their effect. Yet even such wounds might have been healed had Mr. Drayton's success in the conflict given the palpable lie to all evil insinuations. Unhappily this was not destined to be the case.

On the contrary his defeat was decisive. It would be useless, at this day, to speculate as to the causes of that defeat ; be the cause what it might the effect upon him was the same. The disappointment and apparent disgrace were more than the proud and sensitive spirit of this aristocratic descendant of the Puritans could brook. With less than his usual strength and sagacity of character he formed and carried out a resolution deprecated by his more prudent friends. The house on the new land was announced for sale ; and not only the house, but the precious collection of works of art, the library, the rarities, and the curiosities into the bargain. This unexpected event created a stir in Boston. The sale (which took place in the house) was attended by crowds of people, and the bidding was, from the outset, unusually high. It lasted five days, and the gross sum realized for the collection was said, by those wise in such matters, to be at least double that expended for it. The house was

not disposed of by auction, but was sold by private treaty, a few days later, for its full value. Of course, a man of Mr. Drayton's large resources could care little for these details; but it was hinted by his enemies that, at all events, the sale more than reimbursed him for the expenses of the lost election, which, according to their account, had been unrighteously large.

It was supposed that all this was the preparatory step to a prolonged or perhaps permanent sojourn in Europe. To Europe, indeed, Mr. Drayton went, taking his little daughter, Lizzie, with him; but he remained scarcely a year, and then, leaving Lizzie at an excellent school, and under the eye of some friends residing in the vicinity, he came back to his native country and settled in New York. It was in this quiet but telling manner that he requited the ill-treatment of his own city. He bought a handsome house on Madison avenue, between Thirty-fourth and Forty-second streets, and furnished it handsomely, but without any of the artistic accessories that had been his hobby in Boston. He seemed to have resolved to change his habits along with his dwelling-place. He no longer sought the company of merely fashionable or æsthetic people. By

degrees he became well known to wealthy merchants, to leading Wall-street financiers, to statesmen from Washington, and to other distinguished gentlemen interested more or less directly in political matters. He gave select dinners to persons of this class; and, as his wealth was such as to relieve him from the imputation of vulgar motives, and his personal attitude was understood to be that of a judicious and unimpassioned observer, he began to exert an influence of a peculiar and enviable kind. He had the confidence of men of opposite shades of political opinion, because it was known that he had no stake on either side, and because of the singular frankness and directness of his speech on all subjects brought before him. There was a vein of cynicism in it, perhaps, but it was honest cynicism; and it was, for the most part, uncommon sound sense into the bargain. The consequence of this was, that, in the course of the next few years, he found various paths opened to him, both secretly and otherwise, leading to power, political or pecuniary, as the case might be. But he declined to take advantage of any of them. He said that he had been a fool once, that he was glad his folly had been checked so promptly and so sharply, and that he would never

be a fool (of that species) again. All this, of course, by no means decreased the undefined but real influence which we have ascribed to him. It is not to be inferred, however, that he was actually idle. His contemplations were neither aimless nor profitless; he gained a deep and effective insight into the workings and philosophy of the larger social movements and combinations; and we need not too hastily conclude that, in his own way and at his own time, he might not find it worth while to wake some of this stored wisdom practically useful.

Indeed, some three or four years ago (at the date of this story), he had so far overstepped the boundaries of private life as to accept a position in the interests of the city which afforded him an opportunity to repress and chastise certain abuses which (to put it gently) had crept into some departments of the municipal government. He was appointed in compliance with an urgent popular demand, and he soon made it evident that the popular confidence had not been misplaced. During his term of office he was "approached" by delegates of more than one powerful organization; but it was soon discovered that this man with the keen, measuring eyes, and the quiet, satirical smile was not to be tampered with. He was

there to do a bit of work, he told them; he meant to do it and then to step out. And he carried out this programme to the letter. He took no pay for his services, and, what was far more remarkable, he forebore to use the advantages which his position gave him to make profitable investments. "It was an idle man's holiday, — that's all!" he said. "I could afford it; it amused me; and it wasn't worth my while to sell myself, — at least not for any price that anybody seemed able or willing to give."

But *noblesse oblige*; and to have done faithful duty on one occasion made it inevitable that Seth Drayton should be selected for other emergencies of a like nature; and since he could excuse himself on no better ground than an indolent fondness for having his time and thoughts at his own disposal, he was once in a while over-persuaded into undertaking these unwelcome burdens. But we need not pursue this subject further. Mr. Drayton happened to hear favorable mention of Warren Bell, and, after having satisfied himself by personal investigation that the young man was well qualified in his profession, he obtained for him the position in the Hydrographic Department which was the beginning of his career.

"Your father and I were friends, Warren," he said on this occasion; "but that is not my reason for getting you this place. If you were not fitted for it, I should think I served him better by heading you off. Well, now do the rest for yourself. But if you ever care to drop in on me for a social chat, I shall always be glad to see your father's son, — and you too."

Warren Bell expressed his acknowledgments, but very seldom availed himself of the invitation. About this time, also, Miss Lizzie Drayton, having "completed" her education, returned to America to begin life; and few young ladies start on their social career under more promising conditions. She was very young, very well-trained, very pretty, and would have an indefinite number of millions to her dowry. And her father once more modified his style of living, threw open his house to the world of fashion, for Lizzie's sake, and, without losing his hold upon the political world, became once more the fascinating and facile host who had been in abeyance since the old Boston days. Of course he was not quite the same, and some intelligent observers said they liked him better, and others fancied they didn't like him quite so well; but all united in liking Lizzie.

CHAPTER VI.

“THERE’S MY HAND!”

WARREN BELL arrived at Mr. Drayton’s house at 6.30, but the only member of the syndicate who had got there before him was Tom Peekskill, who was already deeply occupied in the entertainment of Miss Lizzie, in the back drawing-room. Mr. Drayton shook hands with him, and after a few minutes’ general conversation, he took him into the library where they were alone. Warren thought that this indicated prospective good-fortune for Tom; but he was not disposed to be envious. Lizzie seemed to him to lack substance.

“I’m early, it appears,” he remarked to Mr. Drayton.

“No,” returned the other, stroking his long, iron-gray beard, and gazing thoughtfully at his guest. “No, but circumstances made it necessary to alter the hour, almost at the last moment, — 7, instead of 6.30. I should have sent you word had I known where to find you. But I’m glad it has turned out so; a word or two of private explanation will do no harm.”

"Is there a syndicate w-within the syndicate?" asked Warren.

"That's just what I want to guard against, if possible. We must all mean the same thing and act with the same object, or not at all, — so far as I am concerned. I have talked with the other men, but not with you."

"What is it all about?"

"Technically and immediately, it's about a new water-supply for the city; but our real and permanent object is much broader, — much broader. Are you willing to promise to make no outside allusion to what you hear, in case you don't go with us?"

"Certainly not," replied Warren, promptly. "I'll have nothing to do with any concealments; we have too much of them already. I would do all I could to let in light and air."

Mr. Drayton smiled, and then looked aside, grasping his beard. "And if light and air, why not water?" he said presently, resuming his contemplative gaze at the younger man. "Well, that's what I wanted to hear from you. Indeed, if I hadn't known it before, I shouldn't have troubled you to come here to-night. Light and air, — purity and freedom, — that's what we all are after. But the way to get them, Mr. Warren Bell, is by method

and persistence — by discipline, — not by hap-hazard and short-sighted spasms of emotional reform.”

“Yes,” admitted Warren, coloring, and feeling that he had once more been over-hasty.

“It isn’t a thing to be undertaken with a light heart,” continued Mr. Drayton. “The opposition we shall have to meet cannot be over-estimated, — its organization, its activity, its power. We shall be fought against as men fight for their lives and liberties.”

“One honest man is a match for a dozen rogues,” said Warren.

“That is cant, sir !” returned Mr. Drayton, quickly. “One rogue is much more likely to overmatch a dozen honest men. The rogue has a definite motive, — his own interest ; the honest man a very vague one, — the interests of morality. You must make your account in this world with flesh-and-blood motives, not with abstract theories.”

“I mean to,” said Warren ; “and I want to know whether this syndicate is based on an abstract theory or a f-flesh-and-blood motive ?”

Mr. Drayton paused a few moments, not as if he were embarrassed, but as if he were debating within himself which of several possible replies to make. At length he asked : —

"Have you any reason to distrust me?"

"There are two reasons why I might distrust you," the young man answered.

"Well, what are they?"

"In the first place, I don't know why you should fix upon me as one of your syndicate. There are engineers enough who understand their business as well as I do, and are much older and better known. You might have thought that I was young and could be managed easily."

"Hoodwinked, that is to say, — made a tool of. Yes. What is the other reason?"

"I don't like your position. You are chairman of the Compensation Fund. A good many of them are said to be rascals. If this syndicate is to put the rascals out, y-you are playing a double game."

"True. But I am not a fool, Mr. Bell. I have had experience, and I have some insight into character. You are a young man, but it needs no magician to see, with half an eye, that you are honest. You have several gifts, but not the gift of dissimulation. You have several virtues, but not (excuse me) the virtue of humility. You are independent and aggressive to a fault. Whatever my reasons for inviting you to join me, it could not have been the expectation of duping you. I have no use for

dupes. I want men who can comprehend a situation, and," he added, smiling, "speak their mind about it."

"I am not incapable of courtesy," said Warren ; "but, if we are to understand each other, I thought ceremony had better wait."

"Now as to my double game. I suppose you know that I have lived in this city for upwards of a dozen years?"

"Yes, I know that."

"But you don't know — because, up to this moment, no one knows it — what my object was in coming here, and what I have been doing since I came. Well, it was in order to tell you those two things that I invited you here this evening." Here Mr. Drayton came a step nearer to his interlocutor, and spoke in a lower tone. "I have always been an upright man, Mr. Bell. I have never aided and abetted rascals ; but I'm free to confess that my abstract preference for right and justice alone would never have kindled me to the fighting-point. I needed a sharper spur than that, and I got it. I'll call it by its worst name — revenge ! Don't be alarmed ; there is no melodrama. I shan't roll my r's nor my eyes, nor call the gods to witness. I am talking business. When I was a Bostonian I had

an ambition, a commonplace and harmless one, to serve my country ; that is, to enter the Legislature to write Honorable before my name, with a governorship or senatorship in prospect. I intended no harm, beyond the gratification of a little vanity, and I fancied I saw my way, incidentally, to doing some good. Well, the rascals must have suspected me of much better intentions than I ever had, for they combined against me, assailed me with the vilest weapons, and defeated me. I imagined I was ambitious before ; but that experience taught me what ambition really was. It taught me the difference between abstractions and flesh and blood. It made me feel the difference between right and wrong in theory, and my right and my wrongs in the concrete. I made up my mind that my defeat should not be final, — that I would fight again, but not until I was armed to the teeth, and knew how to use my weapons. So I came here, because here is the largest field, and here the struggle would be decisive. For these twelve years I have been practising at the mark until now I can hit the bull's-eye every time. I have studied my ground and the tactics of my enemy. I know every important man and combination of men in the State, — and in other States besides this. I know their records, their

secrets, and their aims. And no one of them has fathomed my drift or heeded my evolutions. They think I am a harmless, good man, a useful, popular figure-head to give respectability to their schemes. They know I am beyond the temptations of money, and they fancy my ambition, if I ever had any, died long ago. They find me convenient, but not dangerous. Well, we shall see !”

Mr. Drayton paused at this point, with his beard in his hand, and his keen eyes fixed on Warren Bell. The latter certainly felt that this was a man, and no scarecrow or wind-bag. He had never liked him, but he began now to admire him, and even to be captivated by him. If he were deficient in winning geniality, he had at any rate intellect, will, and passion. If he were a man with a grievance, his grievance had developed instead of narrowing him. He was not to be sounded by ordinary plummets, nor was his orbit to be measured in feet and inches. Moreover, he was a man who had the penetration to see through himself, and the intrepidity not to gloss over what he saw there. He hated corruption and rascality with a personal, not a metaphysical hatred.

To be sure, that might mean that he hated the rascals rather than the rascality, and therefore might

himself use rascality to overthrow them; but such an inference was premature, to say the best of it.

"Now, Warren," said Mr. Drayton, interrupting the young man's meditations, and speaking in a gentler tone than he had yet used, "would you, in my place, act as chairman of the Compensation Fund, or not?"

Warren reflected. "I should not," he said at last.

"Why not?"

"Because I should have to l-lie to those fellows, either actually or implicitly; and l-lying doesn't suit me."

"If your best friend were hunted for his life, and you knew which way he had escaped, would you tell his hunters or lie about it?"

"I'd hold my tongue."

"You would suppress the truth. But suppose they started on the right track?"

"Yes; then I'd lie," Warren admitted.

"And let me tell you this," added Drayton, gravely: "every man has his price. For one, it is a million dollars; for another, love; for another, hate; for another, ambition; for another, his soul's salvation. Don't be deceived in yourself, or you'll be undeceived when you least expect it. From

what I have told you, you may know what my price is. I have resolved to leave my country cleaner of vermin than I found it. I don't pretend to be a miraculous Messiah. I must do it the best way I can; but I will do it, — I'm in earnest! I don't ask you, or any man, to follow in my footsteps; I only ask you to aim at my goal. Help me to win, and you shall share the glory, and I will bear the scars."

"Not at all!" rejoined Warren Bell. "If I join you, we must divide the k-kicks as well as the cake. But I don't half like it."

"You are the son of the only friend I ever had," said Drayton. "Frank Bell and I had our boyish dreams, and confided them to each other. I see him again in you, — his mind and his spirit, — and I tell you fairly, boy as you are, half of my interest in my life's purpose will be gone if you can't be with me in it. But stop and think! Come with your whole heart, or don't come at all."

"Beware!" said Intuition. "Don't be an ass!" said Reason.

"There's my hand," said Warren Bell.

The two men shook hands in silence. The clock struck the hour, and the door-bell rang. The other members of the syndicate began to arrive.

"This water-works business is but the small end of the wedge," remarked Drayton, as they walked towards the reception-room. "These men will serve us so far, and no farther. I shall tell you all about it later. You don't know," he added, smiling, "how much I depended upon you."

Warren did not reply. The thought had flitted into his mind, "What would Nell Anthony say to all this?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE SYNDICATE.

MR. DRAYTON and his daughter sat at opposite ends of the dinner-table, and Warren found himself placed at the latter's right hand, while Tom Peckskill was two seats up on the same side. Tom would probably have liked to have the situation reversed, nor would Warren have offered the least opposition to the change. However, he could see, even when his eye-glasses were down, that Lizzie was looking extremely pretty, and he reconciled himself without much difficulty to making the best of his opportunities. The young lady had golden eyes and bright chestnut hair, with a natural crinkle in it. Her nose lacked just enough of being straight to redeem her face from over-regularity; her upper lip was fuller than the lower, and her complexion had a clear rosiness in it, varying with her mood, which added indefinitely to her charms. She was of fair height, and budding, graceful figure, which had been trained to fall instinctively into becoming and winning poses; while her movements and

gestures were both naïve and refined. Lizzie had all manner of foreign accomplishments ; but it is a valuable testimony to the solidity of American institutions that her innate Americanism (if not Bostonianism) shone through them all, and, it may be added, lent them an additional attractiveness. The girl's hands were particularly beautiful, being soft and dimpled, with rather short and delicately tapering fingers, smooth and flexible. Had all the world possessed such hands, no stroke of work would ever have been done, from Eve till now. Miss Drayton was dressed in a kind of soft flutter of lace and ribbons and delicate jewelery of no definite color, but conveying a subdued reflection of the sunny glow of her eyes, and of their diamond sparkle also.

"How has Easter agreed with you?" Warren inquired.

"It was lovely!" returned Lizzie, in her soft, sensitive voice. "I always am glad of Lent, when Easter comes ; Easter all the year round would be too much, — like sunshine all the twenty-four hours, as they have it at the equator — or the North Pole, is it? Now, don't laugh, — I never was there, so how can I remember? But you don't care for society, do you?"

"B-bless me, yes, indeed!"

"Oh! do you? Well, I do. I love it! Do you dance the german? Well, my ideal of life is, that it should be a continual german, with new figures and favors all the time. I'm sure it's as near perfect as any enjoyment in the world can be, —the music, the lights, the colors, the excitement, the variety."

"The variety of partners, you mean?"

"Yes—and the figures; you get all wound up and think you are lost, and then, at the last moment, you come out all right, in a burst of music! If I were a man, I would do nothing but lead the german all the time, like Mr. Peckskill."

"Is that all he does?"

"Now, you are not to abuse Mr. Peckskill, because I like him, and he dances like a seraph, and I'm sure he speaks well of you; he said just now that you were the brightest man he knows."

"Well, he is the best l-leader of the german I know; so we're square."

"I should think men would get so tired thinking of nothing but business," continued Miss Drayton, after an interval. "Of course, I know some men have to work, whether they like it or not; but—well, now, there's papa; I'm sure he needn't, and I often ask him to please stop, and just have a good

time. But I guess he's never got over dear mamma's death; and, of course, I can't be to him what she was, though I do try to amuse him; but he doesn't care to be amused in my way; he's so wise; and I'm not a bit intellectual, though I am a Boston girl," she said, with a delicate little gurgle of laughter.

"Every man ought to be married, of course," observed Warren.

"You're not married, are you, Mr. Bell?" she asked.

"No; nor likely to be."

"Oh! Why not? — I mean — you said every man" —

"The fact is, Miss Drayton, I never learned how to dance the german, and it was inferred, very naturally, that I wouldn't know how to take care of a wife either. At any rate, the young lady whom I hoped to marry refused me, and I'm too old to learn the german now."

If Lizzie's intellect was limited, her intuitive perceptions were very keen, and she not only felt that Warren was chaffing her, but she divined, also, that she had touched him in a painful spot. "I beg your pardon!" she said, blushing; and then, in the nervousness of the moment, she added, "If

you will come to my next dance I'll teach you" — and stopped short.

"I certainly will," said Warren, with presence of mind; "not to redeem the past, for that's dead and buried, but to p-plant the seeds of hope for the future."

Lizzie laughed, and sipped some iced champagne, in the hope of cooling her cheeks; but her spontaneity was checked for the time being, and she made only short and timid replies to Warren's remarks, until at length he relinquished her to the ardent courtesies of the handsome Irishman, Mr. O'Ryan, who sat on her left.

Mr. Callby, who sat next to Warren, was a very large and heavy man, with a bald head, and yellowish side-whiskers streaked with gray. He had been very busy with his dinner, — a devotion rendered more noticeable by the fact that he wore a set of false teeth, the fastenings of which seemed to be insecure. But, now that the advent of the sorbet had retired him temporarily from the struggle, he emerged as a fine-looking personage, with a suppressed smile about the corners of his mouth, and a demure but triumphant twinkle in his eye.

"Your health, sir," he said, raising his glass of wine as Warren looked towards him. "We ought

to be well acquainted, as I presume we are to act together. You, as well our host, are from the modern Athens, I believe?"

"If Hickory is the modern Athens, I was born there," replied Warren; "but Mr. Drayton came from Boston. Where do you come from?"

"Hem! My native place is Philadelphia," began Mr. Callby, gathering himself together; but Tom Peckskill, who sat beyond him, leaned forward and interrupted.

"He's a reformed Quaker, Warren," he said, "and we've scooped him in to do the imposing for us. But you mustn't let him impose on you. He's the proprietor of a patent method of joining water-pipes together, aren't you, Callby? Say, Warren, old man, are you glad you came? Beats the hydro-graphic racket, doesn't it?"

"Almost as good as c-conducting a german," returned Warren, who did not relish being exploited by anybody. But certainly he was in an unconciliating humor on this evening, and it was the result of several causes. His interview with Nell Anthony, though its issue was what he had wished rather than meant it to be, had perplexed and humiliated him; his compact with Mr. Drayton, though deliberately made, and following the line of

his best aspirations, had only increased his self-dissatisfaction; and finally, his hap-hazard chat with Lizzie had (for no assignable reason) brought all this discontent to a focus, and disposed him to quarrel with whomsoever addressed him. It so happened, however, that he was not again interfered with during the remaining courses; and by the time Miss Lizzie had bade adieu to the guests, he had so far recovered himself as to be able to present a demeanor at least outwardly composed.

Cigars were now handed round, and the guests drew their chairs towards the head of the table.

"This is rather a social than a business meeting, gentlemen," observed Drayton, pouring out a glass of claret, and pushing the bottle. "Our enterprise is going on well, and no revision seems as yet to be necessary. There'll be no opposition to the contract, you think, O'Ryan?"

"Trust me for that!" replied the gentleman addressed, nodding his head, and looking round with a confident smile. "The contract that Terence O'Ryan can't carry out, — if it involved dis-embowellin' every street in the city, from Harlem to the Battery, — hasn't been made yet, and won't, please the pigs!"

In spite of Mr. Terence O'Ryan's defiant lan-

guage, Warren liked his looks better than those of the rest of the syndicate. He had a bold, good-humored, blue eye, a straight, strong nose, with a dark mustache under it, and a square, resolute chin. Warren had heard of him before, and knew that his claim to exemption from ordinary restraints was not without foundation, though it was not clear how the exemption was secured.

"How about the land-owners, governor?" inquired Tom Peekskill, rolling his cigar into the extreme corner of his mouth, and throwing his left arm over the back of his chair.

"Wiston's reports are favorable, I believe," said Drayton, turning to the gentleman on his right. The individual thus indicated was small and plump, and everything about him seemed to be either spherical or circular, according to circumstances. He had a round head, round eyes, a round nose, and a mouth which he was in the habit of pursing up in a circular form; his little body was globular, and the backs of his short hands had a rounded appearance. Mr. Wiston shifted himself in his chair, lifted his thin eyebrows to an inordinate height, and said, in a smooth, piping voice:—

"I think I may affirm, on the part of the land-owners of the district from which I understand it to

be the intention of the syndicate, that the — I would say, along the line of the proposed ” —

“Prepared speeches are out of order!” put in Tom Peekskill, who had a sort of prescriptive license in the matter of humorous impertinences. “Skip your exordium, old man, and let’s have the what-d’ye-call it. The up-country folks are solid, eh?”

“If all the trouble we have comes from them, I guess we’ll get on,” observed Mr. Wiston’s right-hand neighbor, a long-haired, gaunt, hollow-eyed, lank, and sprawling gentleman, with a Western drawl, and incontinence of knees and elbows. “We all hold good cards, but they’ve got a straight flush, — rent and perquisites both. No, sir! all I’m afraid of is, the other fellows getting on to our game and buying over our heads. You must keep your eye peeled, Drayton!”

“You are perhaps not aware, gentlemen,” said Drayton, “that though I should lose a great deal by the failure of our scheme, I shall make nothing, in the way of money, by its success. My position is one of the few real luxuries which being in easy circumstances can give a man. I tell you frankly that I have devised this affair to please myself. Peekskill, here, has charge of my investments, and he

knows how I have placed myself. As you all know, I have made myself responsible for whatever funds may be necessary to put the work upon a successful basis. If we fail, this sum, whatever it may be, is lost, and nothing more will be said about it. If we succeed it will be repaid to me, without interest, by an annual tax of ten per cent. on the net profit of the company. After it has been thus repaid my claims upon the exchequer will finally cease. But, in return for this, I shall occupy permanently the office of director, and my authority will be decisive on all questions of policy and procedure. If any of you are unwilling to accept this arrangement, now is the time to say so."

He looked round the table, at each person in turn, and no one spoke, until his glance fell upon Warren Bell. His announcement had taken Warren by surprise, as it probably had done most of the others, and he had been rapidly examining the situation in his mind. Drayton's proposal seemed not only fair, but magnanimous and almost quixotic, regarded from an ordinary point of view; but Warren, enlightened by their recent interview, perceived that, from Drayton's point of view, the latter's compensation would be abundant. He gave — or refused — money; but he took power in its place; and it was

to be remembered, also, that the revenues which he so grandly rejected were by no means essential to his solvency; he would still be indefinitely richer than, probably, all the rest of the syndicate put together. On the other hand, however, what stronger guarantee of good faith could Drayton give than this? And what motive could he have for abusing any powers with which he was intrusted? In the last resort, moreover, if one did not approve of his proceedings, one could at any rate take himself out of the concern, and be at liberty. Meanwhile, there was certainly no member of the syndicate whom Warren would have preferred to Drayton as director. These thoughts flashed in a moment through his brain.

"As long as you stand by your engagement," he said, "I'll stand by you. All things considered, I think you're about right. You ought not to do less than you propose, and I d-don't care to have you do any more."

"Hear! hear!" exclaimed Terence O'Ryan. "Faith, the hon'able mumber for Hydrography has spoke the sense of the meeting!" And there was a general murmur of acquiescence.

"Of course, this is only an informal statement, which, however, I wished to make to you in a

body," said Drayton. "Our articles of association will be drawn up in due time and form. Mr. Sprayne" — here he nodded at the Western-looking personage — "has conducted our interests at Albany so skilfully that the Legislature has given us all we need without being aware of its own complaisance. Active work will be begun immediately, and our friend, Mr. Warren Bell, will lose no time in beginning the necessary surveys. Mr. Peekskill is authorized to make any necessary disbursements. Mr. Bell, you will find Mr. O'Ryan an agreeable colleague, personally as well as professionally. And now, gentlemen, pass the bottle; let's have done with this dry talk, and enjoy ourselves!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"IS THAT ALL?"

A FEW days after the dinner Tom Peekskill dropped in for an afternoon call. He was to conduct the german at Miss Drayton's approaching ball, and it was in order for him to talk over with her the plan of the figures. Whether by previous arrangement or not, she was alone, and received him as if she had been expecting him.

The house was a large one, with spacious rooms opening into one another, and broad mirrors in various places, so disposed as apparently to extend the already ample vistas. This necessitated a certain amount of circumspection on the part of those who sought for privacy, — lest a deed done in the back drawing-room, for instance, should be visible on the front staircase. Mr. Peekskill, after having shaken hands ceremoniously with his pretty young hostess, walked into an alcove of the library, and when she had followed him there, he turned, took her lightly by the shoulders, and kissed her.

"Say, Liz, how would that do for the first figure

in the german?" he said, pressing her arms, and smiling at her.

"You promised to write to me day before yesterday," returned she, twisting her taper finger in his watch-chain. "I've been looking ever since."

"We'll have to stop that; 'taint safe any longer."

"Tom! what do you mean?"

"The old gentleman suspects something; anyhow he's on the look-out."

"But you always said that he wouldn't mind if he did know" —

"Yes, my dear, and that was all right, then," said Tom, seating himself on a small lounge, and drawing her down beside him; "but then and now are different; and things isn't like they used to was. Excuse my French!"

"But, Tom, don't be stupid; what is it? You are only making fun, aren't you?"

"Liz, I'm giving it to you straight. Say, do you love me? Honor bright?"

She folded her hands in her lap, and looked at him with an expression that her father had never seen in her girlish face, though she loved him too. "You are very unkind," she said. "How could I ever love anybody but you, Tom?"

"Well," replied he, "I've got a rival, anyhow."

"A rival? Do I know him?"

Tom chuckled. "Yes, I guess you do; but the point is, your father knows him too, and what's more, he's backing him up! How does *that* find you?"

"I wish you'd tell me what you're talking about?"

"Well, I'm going to; and, mind you, Liz, this is serious. Perhaps you may not have noticed who sat beside you at dinner the other day? No, I don't mean O'Ryan; he was on the other side. Warren Bell is the man I mean; and don't you forget it!"

"Why, Tom, you must be crazy! I'd as soon think of falling in love with — with that horrid little Mr. Wiston — or — anybody!"

"But, unfortunately, my love, it isn't about falling in love that we are talking; it's about marrying. And Warren Bell is the man your father means you to marry."

"I don't believe it! How do you know?"

"Tom Peekskill's no fool, my dear; he knows when the wind changes. This thing has been coming over the old gentleman for some time back. I used to think his looking after Bell was only to square some old accounts with Bell's father, who was a friend of his; but, however that may have

been, there's more in it now. He's taken hold of Bell, and he's going to ring him for all he's worth. He's going to give him the front place in all the new schemes that are under way, and he'll end up by taking him into the family as the husband of Lizzie Drayton."

All this was so novel and incredible to Lizzie, and was at the same time announced by Tom with so much assurance, that she felt equally disposed to laugh and to cry. Her imagination, without being in the least profound, was lively and susceptible, and she saw herself being torn from her lover's arms and forced into wedlock with a man whose face she scarcely knew. But then she reflected that her father had never been other than indulgent towards her, and the conviction that the whole idea was a delusion returned to her.

"Besides," she exclaimed, coming out of her troubled meditations with a triumphant air, "how do you know that Mr. Bell cares for me? He never acted as if he did."

But at this Tom Peekskill laughed so heartily that Lizzie began to laugh too, under the impression that she must have said something witty.

"Oh, my wig!" cried he at last; "here am I living all my life in New York, and thought I knew

a thing or two, and I never once thought of that! Look here, Liz, being educated in a French convent has made you too wise! Say, you dear little goose, did it ever occur to you that being the prettiest girl in New York is one thing, and all very well in its way, but that being the biggest heiress this side the Rocky Mountains is a horse of another color entirely? Why, if Warren Bell was a Roman Catholic cardinal, with six wives, and seventy years old, he'd kill 'em all and abjure his religion for the sake of getting you! Don't you make any mistake! If a man tells you he loves you, you may believe him or not as you choose; but if he says he wants to marry you — if he was the Father of Lies himself — you may bet your life he's giving you the straight tip as much as if he was the Angel Gabriel!"

"Then, if my money's so much, how do I know whether you love me?" demanded Lizzie with a quaver in her voice, and tears in her golden eyes.

"I don't know how you know it," replied Tom with great presence of mind, "but I know you do know it; and for all I care, your father might bust up to-morrow, and you never come into a red cent. But we settled all that long ago," he added, putting his arm round her waist. "The problem is now, how to euchre Mr. Warren Bell."

"What has made papa take such a fancy to him?" Lizzie asked, with a feeling of comfortable reliance on her lover's arm, and, derivatively, on his wisdom.

"Oh, as to that, there's more reasons than one. Warren is a clever fellow, and he hasn't got himself mixed up in any scrape yet, — isn't mortgaged to anybody, don't you see? Your father has some pretty big schemes in his head, and he needs somebody to help him put 'em through — somebody who doesn't know too much of the ropes (as I do, for instance), and who'll just go in bald-headed, without minding the consequences. That's Warren all over; he'd slip up mighty quick, if he was left to himself; but with somebody to look out for him, and steer him, he could be a pretty strong card. Now, I've got my own notions of what I want to do, and how I want to do it; and I won't take orders from any man beyond a certain point; and the old gentleman knows that just as well as I do, — worse luck for me! That's why I can't ask him to let me marry you."

"But he lets you manage all his affairs, doesn't he?"

"Just as he lets a train of cars carry him to Boston or Chicago: he knows where he wants to go, and he takes care that he gets there; but he

doesn't want the bother of walking. But if he was to find out what you and I were up to — bang! No more tête-à-têtes and germans for us!"

"But he'll have to find it out some time, won't he, Tom?"

"Yes; but not while this Warren-Bell craze is on him, my dear. And, meantime, we've got to be extra careful. You see, as long as he doesn't suspect me he won't cram Warren down your throat too hard; but let him once get that idea in his head, and he'd whisk you off to the church in no time!"

"You talk of me as if I were a bandbox!" exclaimed Lizzie, indignantly. "What if I were to say I wouldn't be whisked off with anybody, — except you?"

"Ah!" returned Tom, shaking his head, gloomily. "You might say it; and I expect that's all you could do, — you'd be Mrs. Bell all the same."

"I'll never be any such hateful thing!" she cried, with quivering mouth; "and if I can't be what I want, I won't be anybody!"

"You don't know your father," continued Tom, in the same sombre tone; "you haven't seen him down-town, among the fellows on the street. I have; and I tell you he's a hard one when he's a

mind to be! Nobody can do anything with him. He's bound to boss things, — and he lets 'em know it once in a while. It's all very well as long as things go his way; but if he runs into anything, it's got to go! Why, that man, Liz, — he'll run this whole country yet, if they're not careful! He's studied the whole thing out; and, easy as he looks, there's more gall in his little finger than in a dozen ordinary men. He'd have you settled quicker than a steam-engine would knock over a ninepin!"

"Do you mean you're going to let me be — be done anything to?" asked Lizzie, beginning to be terrified by these forebodings of disaster.

"If I could do what I'd like to do, we'd be all right," replied Tom, caressing his jawbone with the tips of his fingers. "But you wouldn't want that."

"What? What wouldn't I want, Tom?"

"No; and I should have no right to ask you to do it," continued he, as if talking to himself. "After all, if he didn't come round, where would you be?"

"Tom!"

"Better let it alone, and trust to luck. But if you only would — ? — well, my dear, it's getting late, and" —

"Tom, I declare, if you don't answer me, I'll tell

papa the whole thing the first minute I see him, and let him do his worst ! ”

“ Don’t do that, whatever you do ! ” exclaimed he, hastily. “ There’s a better way than that, though I don’t like to propose it to you.”

“ You’d better tell me ! You’ll find I’m not so much a child as you think.”

He got to his feet with an impulsive air, and she rose with him.

“ Hang me if I don’t, then ! ” he said ; “ and if you don’t like it, remember it’s your fault. This’ll prove how much you care for me, anyhow. Say, Liz, you know I can’t live without you ; and if I’m not to have you, I’d as well know it now as any time. Your father wouldn’t consent to our marriage, and he’d make you marry Warren Bell, if your saying you wouldn’t were all that stood in the way. But you can checkmate him in one way, and only one way, — if you choose.”

She looked up at him, holding him by the lapels of his coat, and biting her under lip.

“ He can break your will easy enough ; but there’s one thing he can’t break, not if he were twice the man he is ; and that’s the law of the realm. And if we have the law on our side, we’ve got him.”

"Well?"

"Well — suppose, one of these fine days, we ran off and got married, without asking leave of anybody? He couldn't part man and wife, and there we'd be."

She let her hands fall, and an expression almost of disappointment came over her charming face. For a moment, Tom thought he had gone too far, and was preparing to retreat under cover of some joke; but his mistake had been of a different kind.

"Is that all?" she exclaimed half incredulously. "Why, you stupid boy, I thought you were going to say something awful. As if any girl in New York wouldn't run away if she got a chance! If I'd been a man, I'd have proposed it half an hour ago!"

"She's a chip of the old block, after all!" murmured Tom to himself, as he took her in his arms and kissed her. "And a Boston girl, too!"

CHAPTER IX.

CHAMPIONS OF REFORM.

MR. TERENCE O'RYAN, the good-looking young Irish contractor, gave Bell a good deal of his company during the latter's first visits to the line of the new water-works. There was no great difference between them in the matter of age, and that little was fully counterbalanced by the buoyancy of the Hibernian temperament. Mr. O'Ryan was a self-made man, and his handiwork already did him credit; yet he considered himself to be only on the first steps of the ladder he meant to climb. "Some say," he remarked, "that the divil — God rest him! — invented politics. If he did, faith, 'twas a mighty genteel act; and if ever he wants a good word, Terence O'Ryan's the man to speak it for him!" Politics, he went on to explain, was, for the poor man, the royal road to wealth and power. More than anything else it tended to obliterate injurious social distinctions. In other countries than America it could hardly be said to exist; at all events it was the appanage of the great, and was

applied mainly to the suppression of the masses, which was reversing its true function. "Look at me!" added the speaker, slapping his broad chest. "Where would I be to-day but for politics? Sure I'd be touching my cap to the same men that are now coolin' their heels every morning in me ante-chamber, waitin' to ax me a favor!"

"Then you prefer politics to d-dynamite?" said Warren.

"Well, now," replied Terence, "I'll not be denyin' that dynamite is a nice domestic utensil to have handy if a man must live in the ould contree; but, in the Land of the Free, me dear boy, I carry my dynamite in my brain. There's no flash-in-the-pan about it, for one thing; and it removes all obstacles without either noise or mortality."

"And you think politics is the best business a man can turn his brains to?"

"'Tis the business of businesses!" returned the other, sententiously.

"Politics is a humbug," said Warren. "It pretends to benefit the people, and it only benefits the p-politicians."

"Then who's to prevent the people being politicians too; so we'll all be happy together?" rejoined the Irishman, with a wink.

"What do you think of this water-works job?" Warren inquired. "Is there any politics about that?"

"D'ye see that pond over there?" replied Terence, pointing with his cigar to a small sheet of water at the base of the hill on which they were standing. "Well, Mr. Bell, if I was to tell ye there was as much politics in this job as there is water in that pond, it 'ud be just the truth, and no less. Look ye here, me dear friend: there's that ould thief, Sprayne, — no offence to him, — up at Albany; wasn't he bringin' in three separate bills before the Legislature, at three separate times, each one with no harm in the world in it, like the component parts of gunpowder, but put 'em together, and — bang! There we are with our charter as safe as if 'twas in our pockets. Is there any politics about that, I don't know? For me own part, bein' a modest man, I say nothing; only, if any man tells you that another than Terence O'Ryan could have rigged the politics that'll carry some pipes through New York streets, ye may tell him he's a liar, and refer him to me for satisfaction!"

"And Drayton, — what of him?"

"Drayton's a big man — there's no denyin' that!" said Mr. O'Ryan, twisting his mustaches. "'Tis not

the money he's after ; nor distinction neither, — at least, not the same way as the rest of us. He's a deep one, and no mistake ; and what his game is, is none of my business. I see my own share of the swag plain enough ; but he may do as he likes."

"You will be paid for your work, of course ; but this thing is no steal ; it's to give water to the city at fair rates."

"Well, that's true, too," assented the other, nodding his head sagaciously ; "and may the city never be without a drop of good whiskey to put in it !"

Warren Bell discounted a good deal of this kind of talk on the score of the picturesque and imaginative instincts of the Irish character. He felt sure that O'Ryan, say what he might, would never do a dirty act when it came to the point. No doubt, any conceivable scheme would be open to abuses from the evil-disposed ; but it was no less certain that this enterprise of Drayton's would overthrow a monstrous monopoly, and introduce a cleaner order of things. It was well to be identified with such a movement, even though one's associates might be something less than immaculate. The river that cleanses Augean stables must expect to contract some temporary defilement.

But, though there was something in O'Ryan's

personal equation which made Warren like him, he was less charitable in the case of some of the other members of the syndicate. There was Mr. Callby, the inventor, for instance. Warren had an interview with him one day, in reference to his water-pipes, which were warranted never to leak or otherwise get out of order. The device was undeniably ingenious and effective, and also very simple; but Mr. Callby himself struck his visitor as being less lovely than his invention. Warren happened to inquire what he expected to receive for the use of his patent, and heard a sum mentioned that caused him to put on his eye-glasses and thrust out his chin.

"Why, man alive!" he exclaimed, "the repairs of the ordinary pipes for fifty years wouldn't amount to a tenth of that. Wh-what sort of economy do you call that?"

Mr. Callby laughed, shaking his portly sides softly, and nearly losing his teeth in his merriment. "We inventors," he explained, "favor the maxim that charity begins at home. The world is certain to profit by our discoveries in the end; but, the duration of an individual life being strictly limited, we must — ha! ha! — make our hay while our individual sun shines. In other words, we make all

we can out of our contemporaries, but impose no restrictions upon posterity."

"Very good, if your contemporaries understand what bargain they are making. But do you mean to tell me that the public would accept your pipes, if they knew what they were paying for them?"

"Ha! ha! very possibly not. But that is the advantage of a public, my dear sir; it never does know; and, to be serious, it never cares. In those facts lies its infinite superiority to the wealthiest private customer. The American people, Mr. Bell, — you may take my word for it, and it is an important truth to bear in mind, — never cares, and never will care, for economy. Congress has its economical spasms, of course, — when it has a particularly big robbery on foot; just as a pick-pocket will restore you a five-cent piece that you've dropped, in order the more unsuspectedly to relieve you of a hundred-dollar greenback. The individual American, again, is often economical; a man will walk up town from his place of business to save car-fare, and spend a dollar or two in drinks along the way. But the American people, once it takes a fancy to a thing, — from a Brooklyn bridge to a civil war, — is going to have it, if it taxes itself twenty-five cents on a dollar. And then,

the higher you put the price, the more likely you are to get it."

"All that doesn't prevent robbery from being robbery," said Warren, bluntly.

"What am I to understand by that, sir?" demanded Callby, sticking out his lips.

"You may understand what you like!" retorted Warren, angrily; "but what I understand is, that you are swindling the city. And I'll d-do what I can to stop it!"

Callby's forehead reddened; but, for whatever reason, he controlled himself after a few moments, and said with dignity, "Mr. Bell, I am not responsible to you for my business arrangements. The market value of an idea is never less than it will fetch. As regards the sum of money I have mentioned to you (and I may remark that the statement was made under the impression that I was speaking to a gentleman of honor, who could appreciate the sacredness of a business confidence), — as regards this sum, I say, I have consented to receive the bulk of it in bonds of the company. I am, therefore, selling my birthright for what may after all prove to be but a mess of pottage; for the combination on the other side may beat us yet."

"In which case you would go over to them, bag

and baggage," said Warren, only this time he did not utter the words aloud. He perceived that, once again, he had lost his temper to no purpose. The security of men like Callby was in the fact that, however insignificant or contemptible they might be in themselves, they represented, in some sort, the spirit of the age; they were in accord with the popular, or, at least, permitted ways of doing and regarding things. It was not this or the other particular individual, therefore, upon whom the reformer must apply his pressure; he must first create a revulsion or improvement in the current sentiment and custom. His reflections upon these matters inclined Warren to think that Drayton held broader and sounder views concerning them than his own. He had postponed the attack upon persons to that upon systems; and for Warren to prosecute a guerilla warfare on his own account would probably be worse than useless. He needed experience, and, more than all, he needed power. Drayton possessed both, perhaps in an even greater degree than Warren had as yet given him credit for. All the same, it was difficult to refrain from denouncing a scoundrel when you met him.

Meanwhile the scheme itself prospered. The wheels were oiled, and ran smoothly, and several things which wore the superficial appearance of

obstacles proved in the end to have an effect precisely opposite. A newspaper, for example, would make a bitter attack upon some feature of the enterprise, and by and by this very feature would turn out to be one of the strongest and most praiseworthy of all; and a merely passive acceptance of the measure would thus be intensified into active sympathy with unjust persecution. Or, again, a deputation would wait upon the mayor to obtain his consent to some step, and the mayor would severely criticise the application. The deputation would retire abashed; but, within a few days or weeks, evidence would be forthcoming, in some inadvertent, unexpected way, which would cause the official to withdraw his animadversions, and to express regret at having been misled in regard to so estimable a proposal. Hereupon, the mayor would be commended for acknowledging an error in the interests of reform, and the reform itself would shine all the brighter.

In none of these episodes did Drayton appear. His name was never mentioned in connection with the scheme, and no one outside of the syndicate seemed to have the least suspicion that he was even remotely involved in it. Even the syndicate saw nothing of him in an official capacity. Had they

been called to the witness-stand, most of them could only have testified that if funds were needed they were always forthcoming ; that if instructions were required, they were conveyed to the proper quarter ; and that the movement of affairs was regulated and directed by a consistent and constant purpose. They might have added that, to the best of their belief, this power in the background was Seth Drayton ; but they could hardly have stated as much on oath. Still less could they have assigned any plausible reason for this reticence on his part. All the more did it affect their imaginations (an almost invariable attribute of Americans in every walk of life), and strengthen Drayton's control. They understood themselves, but not him ; and the familiar principle of *omne ignotum pro magnifico* probably had its application in their case.

Warren Bell alone had been, in any important degree, admitted to Drayton's confidence ; but the revelation was as yet too incomplete, and Warren too unprepared for its full reception, for him to have gained a substantial comprehension of Drayton's attitude. Tom Peekskill, on the other hand, was vastly more knowing than Warren ; but his positive information was less. His native penetration had served him somewhat, however ; and he had, be-

sides, a source of knowledge which, though not yet very affluent, might be trained to become so ; and which had the valuable quality of being wholly unsuspected by Drayton. He could never have conceived of his daughter in the light of a spy and intriguer ; and he despised Tom Peekskill too profoundly to dream that he would venture to establish relations with Lizzie. Events had, indeed, occurred between the two men, which placed Tom completely in Drayton's power, — at least, to all ordinary intents and purposes. What Drayton commanded, Tom must do, under pain of social and professional extinction. But, though it is often convenient to make a shrewd and ready man your bondslave, the convenience is not always a safe one. There are weak points in almost every armor ; and no one is so likely as a shrewd and ready bondslave to find them out and take advantage of them. Drayton, indeed, was not so unwise as to drive any man to desperation. In return for depriving Tom of his liberty, he gave him what it was reasonable to suppose he most valued, — ample opportunities of making a large income. But, possibly, he under-estimated the strange infatuation for liberty which even men like Tom will manifest, especially when it can be combined with the passion for retaliation.

It is no wonder, however, if he gave less than adequate attention to the matter at this moment. For the new water-works scheme had now reached that point of development where it came into direct and open collision with the monopoly which it aimed to overthrow; and the monopoly arose in all its strength to meet the emergency. Drayton possessed the advantage (among others) of having foreseen and calculated upon all contingencies beforehand; and he entered into the conflict with a cool brain and a steady hand.

CHAPTER X.

GETTING EDUCATED.

SEVERAL of the main bulwarks of the old order of things were members of the commission of the Compensation Fund, of which Drayton was chairman. These men had hitherto regarded the new scheme with a comfortable contempt. None of the persons who were publicly known as its supporters had any particular weight or reputation, social or political. The enterprise was assumed to have been started with no more serious purpose than that of inducing the holders of the monopoly to buy it up; but it had not shown enough signs of vitality to make even this worth while. It was an amusing piece of impudence, and nothing more. "It's a sign of the prosperity of the country," said old Judge Muhlbach, who was a humorist, "that a set of men can get up a swindle, not expecting it to succeed, but just for the fun of it!" All of a sudden, however, the amusing impudence assumed an aspect of threatening earnestness. The first hasty and somewhat haughty overtures for an "arrange-

ment" were summarily rejected; indications of wholly unsuspected strength and resources appeared on all sides; and Judge Muhlbach's party, much to their astonishment, found themselves in a serious embarrassment. The worst of it was that they were at a loss to imagine who their real opponent could be.

The Judge, however, was accounted (not without reason) one of the ablest and most influential men in New York politics; and his friends, despite the gloomy outlook, relied confidently on his delivering them from their predicament. In this conjuncture it became a subject of grave speculation to Warren what Drayton would do. Drayton and the Judge had always been on friendly terms, and the Compensation Fund was an institution without the countenance of which the new water-works could not receive its final consecration. One of two alternatives, therefore, seemed inevitable: either the consecration in question would be wanting, or else Drayton must descend to a dissimulation and trickery in which it would require more than all of Warren's hardly-acquired toleration to support him.

Warren had been absent from New York nearly a week, superintending the last details of the survey; and during this time he had had no communication

either with Drayton or any others of the syndicate. On the morning of his return he called at Drayton's house to make his report. Drayton greeted him with the quiet and frank affection which he had always manifested towards the young man since their memorable interview.

When Warren's business was concluded Drayton (who was seated at the broad writing-table in his library) said, "Now, then, the campaign begins."

"I don't envy you your part," said Warren.

Drayton smiled slowly, and stroked his long beard. He took up a newspaper from the table, unfolded it, and handed it to Warren, indicating a particular column. Warren took it, and read the head-line, — "Mr. Drayton Retires from the Compensation Fund."

"Look it over while I write a letter," said Drayton, taking up his pen, and turning away.

Warren read on. It was an "interview" with Mr. Drayton, and nearly filled the column. The following passages may be quoted: —

Reporter. Is it true, Mr. Drayton, that you have resigned from the Compensation Fund Commission?

Mr. Drayton. I have severed my connection with that body.

R. What were your reasons for that step?

Mr. D. A belief that the public interest would be served thereby.

R. Did you have any disagreement with your colleagues, or with any one of them?

Mr. D. I became convinced of my inability to act in harmony with them.

R. Was this conviction of general or of specific application?

Mr. D. I cannot fully reply to that question. I may say, however, that, had my construction of the attitude of the commission been the same formerly that it is now, I should have retired earlier.

R. I may take it, then, that your action is based upon certain revelations that have recently come to your knowledge. What are those revelations?

Mr. D. I must decline to tell you.

R. Are your relations with any particular member of the commission more strained than with the rest?

Mr. D. In the event of a test-vote, I should probably have stood alone. But, in a body of that kind, some one man will generally represent and, in a measure, control the views of the others.

R. May not this be construed as a reference to Judge Muhlbach?

Mr. D. I must distinctly refuse to be drawn into any mention of names. . . .

R. How came you to accept the chairmanship of this commission, Mr. Drayton?

Mr. D. I was called to it by persons of credit in the community.

R. Was it not supposed that your election would inspire public confidence?

Mr. D. There may possibly have been some such motive.

R. Did you receive any remuneration for your services, pecuniary or otherwise?

Mr. D. None whatever.

R. Do you consider that you were used by the commission as a cloak to divert suspicion from their proceedings, — of course without your knowledge?

Mr. D. You must permit me to maintain reserve upon that point. I especially desire to avoid public or political notoriety. As one of the largest tax-payers in the city, I have wished, it is true, not to shirk my fair share of responsibility in municipal affairs; but office-holding, in any shape, is irksome to me; and, after this experience, I shall certainly never be induced to assume any public position again. . . .

R. In the event of any charges being preferred against your late colleagues would you go upon the stand against them?

Mr. D. Should I be legally cited as a witness I must, of course, testify according to my conscience and belief. But your question seems to me unnecessary. I neither desire nor anticipate any such contingency.

R. One more question, Mr. Drayton: are you in favor of the new water-works scheme?

Mr. D. So far as I know, the scheme itself is good, and should enable the city to get its water at reasonable rates. But you are not to take this as an indorsement of the parties (whoever they may be) who are putting the scheme into effect. As I just told you, my late experience has made me cautious. I desire to advance no opinion either for or against any person whatever.

"Well?" said Drayton, looking up quietly, as Warren laid down the newspaper.

"Well — is it genuine?" Warren asked.

"It's a fairly accurate account of what I said."

"But not necessarily of what was in your mind."

"Not of all that was in my mind, certainly. For instance, I said that my retirement was due to a new revelation I had received as to the designs of the commission. But I did not explain that I was myself the cause of this revelation."

"I don't think I c-catch on," said Warren, dropping his eye-glasses.

"These men," said Drayton, leaning forward slightly on the arm of his chair, "have believed all along that they were bamboozling me, — that they were the thimblerriggers, and I the dupe. They thought they were using my known integrity and character as a screen to the public of their misdeeds. The public would think that they must be all right, since Drayton was their chairman. But, as a matter of fact, I have all along known more of their doings and designs than most of themselves know. They bargained for a blind man, and they got an Argus. Very well. The moment came when it suited my purposes openly to break with them. But, in doing this, I did not wish them to suspect that I had seen through them from the first. Therefore, I made a test-case, as it were. I feigned to discover a certain rascality, of which I had long been aware. I de-

nounced their conduct in open session, and announced my withdrawal. They tried to compromise with me, but, of course, ineffectually. Then they wanted to know whether I intended publicly to expose them. I replied that, so far as I was concerned, their only exposure would consist in the public knowing that I had severed relations with them. The interview which you have just read will serve two purposes : it will convince the commissioners that I know no more than I stated to them, and it will lead the public to suspect that there may be more in the matter than appears on the surface."

"But what is the meaning of your remarks on the water scheme?" demanded Warren.

"That I can better explain to you later on," Drayton replied ; "it is a more important point than would at first appear. What I wish to know now is, whether you go with me so far? You remember, Warren, that I depend on you, and on no one else."

"Well," said Warren, after a pause, "I guess I'm getting educated, or something ! I begin to see that we must do the best we can with what we've got. I'm glad, at all events, that you've got clear of that Compensation Fund, and that you've given them a piece of your mind — even if it's only a piece !"

"They will get the whole of it in due time," Drayton responded, with a momentary sparkle of his dark eyes. "But as to being clear of the Compensation Fund, we should be a little premature in counting on that. They intend—that is to say, Muhlbach intends—to pull the plug out of our water scheme; and unless you and I can stop him, he'll do it."

"Can I have anything to do with it?" asked Warren, looking up with some animation.

"You'll have a great deal to do with it, if you're not afraid of him."

"I shan't mind being afraid of him, if I can once g-get at him!"

"Everybody will tell you that Judge Muhlbach is one of the most powerful men in New York; so he is, and one of the most dangerous, too. The rascals have no stronger or safer friend than he; and yet he has managed so well, that no charge has ever been brought against him. But I think we can scotch him, for all that."

Here he paused, opened a drawer of the table, and took from it a handful of letters and papers, which he placed on the desk. Tapping them with his fingers occasionally, he continued:—

"I became acquainted with the Judge about ten

years ago, at the time of the scandal about the great ring frauds. The Judge had the confidence of the community, and when it became known that the accused would be arraigned before him all the honest men were at ease. Justice was certain to be done; and, so far as has ever appeared, justice was done without favor and without mercy. And yet, at that very time, Judge Muhlbach was plotting on the side of the scoundrels, with their money in his pocket, and, but for one of those accidents which no one can foresee, and for which shallow men extol Providence, every man of them would have been scot-free to-day. It was not his fault; he did his best, and they recognized that, and therefore took their punishment without peaching on him. They reflected, probably, that he might be useful another time."

"Are you certain of what you say?" asked Warren, somewhat surprised at the gravity of the accusation.

"If I were less than certain I should never have undertaken this water scheme. To make a long story short, I happened upon traces of the truth, and then I spared neither money nor pains to complete the evidence. It took a good deal of money and a good deal of pains; but there it is — every

line of it!" He raised his hand, and brought it down again softly on the pile of papers. "And now the time has come to profit by it."

"Why now, particularly?"

"Because Judge Muhlbach is the only man who can crush our enterprise. And you and I are the only men who can crush him. And we'll do it to-day."

"Where does my part come in? You'll publish these papers in the newspapers" —

"'You teach me, like a fool, the way to lose him!' — no offence, Warren; I'm only quoting Cleopatra. But now I'll give you what our friend Peekskill would call the straight tip. When you want to get rid of a man who stands in your way, two courses are open to you. You can either let him run away, or you can cut off his retreat, and set out to annihilate him. Which method would you prefer?"

"In a case like this, the last," said Warren.

Drayton smiled. "That's because you don't know yet what war is, except in poetry and romance. When a man is frightened, and sees a way open behind him, he runs, and that's the end of it; there's no noise, no delay, and no risk. But when you make him desperate, it's a different matter alto-

gether. Having nothing to lose by fighting, and everything to gain, he fights as no other man will fight. He brings in all his friends (who are as much interested as he is), all his resources, all his strength of every kind. A man like Muhlbach, if he didn't beat us, could delay us and hamper us so that our victory would be worth practically little to us. And possibly we might miss the victory after all. I prefer to let him run away."

"Well, how will you do it?" asked Warren, narrowing his eyes, and resting his chin on his hand.

"You will take these documents, and study them carefully, until you've fully mastered all they mean. Then you'll go to Judge Muhlbach's house and send up your card. You will say that you've been informed he means to oppose the water-works scheme. When he assents to that you will remark that such and such things have been charged against him, — going into details as far as may be necessary; and you will ask him whether, under the circumstances, he thinks it advisable to assume a hostile attitude towards the plan. When he protests and denies you will tell him you have nothing more to say; that he knows whether or not the charges are true, but that your informant told you that he would, if called upon, present himself within half an hour,

and repeat the charges to Judge Muhlbach's face. And, unless I am very much mistaken, Warren, that will finish the episode, as the French say. You will still have your powder unexploded; the Judge will have his retreat open; he will know his danger, and he will take to his heels with all manner of dignity and tact. Whereas, were we to attack him through the newspapers, our secret would be out at once, our trump-card played at the opening of the game, and the Judge would have no motive for not resisting. No, no! Whenever you see malfeasance in office attacked by a newspaper you may be sure that the attack is made, not in the interests of justice, but for the interest of the newspaper. It is good for circulation, but not for anything else."

Warren rose to his feet and took up the documents. "I l-like the job," he exclaimed, "and I'll do it!"

"Be polite, and be cool, and don't be in a hurry. Give him elbow-room. You hold winning cards, but be careful! for the result of this first diplomatic mission of yours will influence many greater things than the new water-works!"

CHAPTER XI.

DIPLOMACY.

WARREN began to examine his evidence at twelve o'clock; by two o'clock he had mastered it, and was on his way to Judge Muhlbach's house. This was a cozy but unassuming mansion on West Thirty-seventh street. The Judge was a bachelor, and liked comfort, but not ostentation. He lived like a worthy and hard-working American citizen, who has secured an honest competence for his declining years. He was a man of many friends, and a favorite in society. His conversation was fluent and entertaining, full of anecdote and humor, and enriched with the vast and varied store of information which a nearly thirty-years' familiarity with the outer and inner life of New York had given him. His professional repute was high; he was faithful to his friends, and was said to be charitable to his enemies. Though not generally thought to be a very wealthy man, he was generous to those who claimed his assistance; and though not lavish of sanctimonious phrases, he was a faithful supporter

of the Episcopal Church. He was nearly sixty years of age, and each successive year brought him new honor and respect.

As Warren Bell rang the door-bell of this honest gentleman's house, he felt himself in better heart and spirits than for many a week past. Hitherto his part in the arena of life had been small and obscure; he had merely filled out or aided the designs of others. But now he was practically his own master; and not only so, but he held in his hand the destinies of others, and of great undertakings. He was a messenger plenipotentiary;— he could make or mar as he chose. By making him the depository of this important trust Drayton had put Warren on an equality with himself; they were equals, no longer as a matter of phrase or courtesy, but in solid fact. And the work which was to signalize the young man's entrance into the independent sphere, was especially suited to his character and present convictions. He was to attack corruption and oppression in the person of Judge Muhlbach. Corruption and oppression had long been his abstract foes; for a long time he had been planning imaginative combats with them and victories over them; and now he was to satisfy these aspirations in the concrete. Warren had what a

phrenologist would call the combative bump well developed.

He was admitted into the Judge's presence without difficulty. The Judge always aimed to be easy of access; and he knew so many people that he could not always be quite sure whether he knew a given person or not. On this occasion, at all events, he happened to be at leisure, and Warren was shown up. Judge Muhlbach had just partaken of luncheon, and was sitting with one elbow resting on the table (which supported a bottle of claret), a cigar in his mouth, and the last new novel in his hand; for he was a professed admirer of fiction, and used to say, in his humorous way, that he meant some day to try his hand at it himself.

Warren saw before him a well-preserved man, with very broad shoulders and a strong figure; though now rather obese. His gray hair stood upright on his head, and was cut quite short, his eyebrows were thick and dark, and curved downwards over a steady and penetrating pair of black eyes. The lower part of the face was not so remarkable as the compact and convex forehead, though there was plenty of firmness about the chin and lower jaw. It was a countenance which seemed designed to be merely animal and obstinate, but which tenacious

purpose had refined and brightened with an intellectual light. Evidently, the Judge was no common man; and Warren could understand at once, even from a personal stand-point, the stories he had heard about the man's "influence." He would like to have seen him and Drayton opposed to each other, face to face.

The Judge, on his part, saw in Warren a person not immediately referable to any of the various types with which he was most familiar; but the bearing and appearance of the young man made him consider it worth while to rise from his chair and extend his right hand. He had a keen intuition in such matters. He could not make up his mind, however, exactly, what the young man had come for.

Warren shook hands with him, accepted a chair, admitted that it was a warm day for the season, refused wine and cigars. He did not wish anything to stand in the way of his making himself as disagreeable as circumstances might require.

"Have I had the pleasure of meeting you before?" now inquired the Judge, with a look of fixed but kindly scrutiny from underneath his overhanging eyebrows.

"No, you have not," said Warren. "I was until

lately an engineer in the Hydrographic Department. I resigned my position there last spring."

"Ah! well — let us see. The Hydrographic Department would be considered a good opening. I don't know whether I could help you to" —

"I don't mean to trouble you in that way," said Warren, as the Judge paused. "I have been working this summer for the new water-works."

"Yes," said the Judge, in a tone of friendly interest; "that must have been a very desirable position. I can see you are no beginner. Well, sir, civil engineering is one of the best professions open to a man in this country. I recollect when I was a boy having done something with the chain and the theodolite myself. But circumstances interfered, and I got switched off. I've always regretted it. I was always very fond of the open air."

"You have heard about the water-works scheme?" said Warren, sticking to his point.

"After a fashion — yes. Of course, such things reach me rather in their general than in their specific aspects. A very enterprising and ably-conducted idea, I should say."

"It has prevailed over obstacles, so far, Judge Muhlbach."

"Yes, — yes. From the engineer's point of

view there were probably many." The Judge spoke these words in a meditative tone; but he was looking very narrowly at his interlocutor, and was holding himself as motionless as a statue.

"I mean, from the political point of view, — from y-your point of view, say."

"Ah! But with those ulterior matters you, as an engineer, would probably not feel personally interested."

"A man may have interests outside of his profession. You are said to have."

"Fairly put!" exclaimed the Judge, with a chuckling, good-natured laugh. "Yes," he continued, dropping the butt of his cigar into the ash-tray, and rubbing his hand over his short bristly hair; "my orbit has passed the political boundary occasionally. But, as regards this water scheme, I should be inclined to judge it in a broader aspect than the merely political one. Such things are either public benefits or public injuries."

"Do you consider this a public benefit?"

"You ask me a straight question, and I'll give you a straight answer. I consider it a public injury. That is my opinion; though I can't tell, of course, of what use my opinion can be to you."

"That depends on whether you stop at having the opinion, or mean to act upon it."

"You must allow me to suspect, Mr. Bell, that you are not asking these questions solely on your own responsibility." Then he said rapidly, in a changed, imperative tone, "Are you the emissary of the men whose names appear in connection with this scheme?"

The question happened to be so worded that Warren could immediately reply, "No; none of them know anything about this interview."

"Then what do you want of me?" demanded the Judge, still imperatively.

"I want you to promise to do nothing against the water-works scheme," said Warren, looking at the other with an ingenuous smile.

The Judge paused a moment. "Do you know, Mr. Bell," he said, resuming his mild and meditative air, "you quite interest me! Pardon my having spoken abruptly. One has to resort to various means of finding out what sort of a person one is talking with. And surely, now, your account of yourself is a little—incomplete? You are asking me to be very frank; ought you not to set me the example? It would give me pleasure to oblige you; but, in matters affecting the public weal, one

cannot always follow one's desires. When we know each other a little better, I dare say there will be no difficulty. There ought not to be, between honest men."

"I can only say, that I believe it is as much your interest to let this scheme alone as it is that of its promoters to have you do so."

"May I ask you what leads you to that opinion?"

"I think your motives in opposing it would be unfavorably criticised."

"Ah! I am tolerably well known in this city," said the Judge, gently, "and I had hoped that my motives, in any matter, might at least be given the benefit of a doubt. You may be right, however. But may I ask why, again?"

"In the first place, you are connected with the monopoly which we mean to overturn."

"Yes? Well, let us suppose I am. The monopoly, as you call it, has the support of many of our best citizens. It does its work, and earns its just wages. Do you yourself think, prejudice aside, that it can or ought to be displaced by another monopoly, run in the interests of a set of political adventurers?"

It passed through Warren's mind that the phrase "political adventurers," though pronounced in a

courteous tone, was in itself scarcely complimentary ; but he reflected, at the same time, that the majority, at least, of his colleagues merited no better appellation. It opened the way, however, for a retort, which he did not hesitate to make.

"We don't aim to establish a monopoly ; we mean to put an honest institution in the place of an organized system of robbery."

"You mean to say, then," said the Judge, gravely, "that I am connected with a system of organized robbery?"

"Well, y-yes," replied Warren.

The Judge bent his brows for a few moments ; but suddenly he threw back his head, and laughed heartily.

"Upon my word, Mr. Bell, I'm glad to have made your acquaintance, — and I am making it very fast ! You're a man of strong convictions, and you have the courage of them. But civil-service reform is one thing, and pitching into well-meaning elderly gentlemen at random is another. Your first step should be to discriminate between your friends and your enemies, instead of trying to make enemies of your friends. So far as I can gather, you call this monopoly a robbery, not as the result of your personal investigations of its practices but

because some person or persons, in whom you have confidence, have told you that it is. Now, you don't know me; but a great many people, who do know me, have confidence in me, and if I tell them that the monopoly is not a robbery, why shouldn't they believe me just as much as you believe your informant? I only want to indicate that it is dangerous to make up your mind until all the evidence is in. Now, perhaps, — I only offer the suggestion in the course of argument, — perhaps your informant is interested in your water scheme?"

"It is only fair to tell you, Judge Muhlbach, that I should never have come here if this had been the only thing I had to say to you. But whether or not your monopoly is honest makes no difference as to your motives being suspected. Even if you were above blame there, you are beyond help in another matter."

"Another matter? Now, have a care, young gentleman! I have every desire to show you consideration, for you seem to mean well. But I warn you to weigh your words from this point onwards. I shall meet you as man to man, and I cannot help it if every advantage is on my side."

"You will need all your advantage, and I need none," replied Warren, his own voice and manner

somewhat reflecting the Judge's earnest solemnity ; for, now that the crisis seemed to be at hand, he was sensible how serious a thing it is to destroy a man's reputation before his eyes, — even when there were no other eyes looking on.

"Well, let us have the other matter, then," said the Judge, relaxing into an air of demure banter. "Pardon me if I light another cigar. Are you sure you won't think better of it, and join me? I can recommend them!"

A double meaning may have lurked in these words ; but, if so, Warren made no offer to discern it. He again declined the cigars, and straightened himself in his chair for the attack.

"We can both remember that we are man to man," he said, "and that what I have to say need go no further, unless you wish it. I don't wish it, for punishing you is none of my business. I only want to prevent a particular piece of mischief. And you can save us both a disagreeable time by stopping me as soon as you can catch my drift ; but if you prefer to fight it out to the end, all right ! You remember what occurred about ten years ago — the municipal frauds, and all that?"

"I have reason to remember it : some of those men had been my personal friends ; the course of

events brought them before me as culprits, and it became my duty, in the discharge of my office, to sentence them. Let me see — you were a child at school then, I think?”

“I would rather be taught my lessons at sixteen than at sixty,” was on the tip of Warren’s tongue; but he kept it back. He felt that the old man before him was anxious, and was trying to disguise his anxiety; and he could not help being sorry for him.

“Did any letters pass between you and any of those men, after suspicion fell on them?” was his next question.

The Judge smiled. “That is hardly likely. I certainly can’t charge my memory with any such foolish breach of official etiquette. Come, come, young gentleman! Some malicious scamp has been cramming you with a lot of scandalous nonsense. Take a friend’s advice, and have no more to do with it. You have evidently fallen into bad hands. I’ll tell you what I’ll do with you, — for, in spite of your confounded impertinence, there’s something about you that I like, — if you will cut loose from that very shady set you’re entangled with now, it shall be my personal concern to see that you get a good start in an honorable and brilliant career. I

can introduce you to men, and to opportunities, that will" —

"You may as well hear me out first," interrupted Warren, dryly, "and then you'll be better able to f-fix my price exactly. I was going to ask you whether you remembered any such passage in one of the letters as this (I quote from memory — I haven't the letter with me): 'For God's sake, make no statement until you hear from me in full. You will be arrested to-morrow; but I have so arranged matters that you will ultimately be brought before me, and I am confident that your acquittal can be secured. I have as much at stake as you, and shall work for you and the rest as I would for myself. If I have any power in this city, you will be better off three months hence than you ever were before.'"

"That will do, sir!" exclaimed the Judge, rising from his chair with a magisterial air. "I regret to find how much I have been mistaken in you. Keep your letters, and whatever else you may have stolen from waste-paper baskets or bribed footmen for. Print them, word for word, in the newspapers to-morrow morning, — if they will buy them of you, — and you will only confirm my integrity and the dishonor of yourself and of your associates. My

policy, my motives, and my aims are not to be represented by garbled extracts from private communications, which often have a superficial appearance wholly at variance with their true purport and object. I'll have you to know that I fear no man, and no revelation. My reputation is stronger than any attack that a hundred such fellows as you can bring against it."

So saying, the Judge stretched forth his hand to the mantel-piece to get a light for his cigar; but the hand trembled so that, coming in contact with a jar of Japanese porcelain, it brought it to the ground, and smashed it into fragments.

Warren, who had also risen, gained self-command as he saw the other lose it; and his manner was unusually cold and quiet as he said, "Our conference so far has been a private one, Judge Muhlbach; but, if you feel in any way dissatisfied with my manner of putting the case to you, I will send a messenger to the gentleman who has the papers, and he will come at once and explain things. But, you know, what goes beyond two is apt to go far. You must choose between me and the newspapers."

"I wish to have nothing more to do either with you, or with any one connected with you."

"Then you agree to do nothing, either directly or indirectly, to oppose the water-works scheme?"

"I'll make no agreements, sir!" cried the Judge, frowning darkly. "As to your paltry water-works scheme," he added, in an uneven voice, "you've been wasting my time and exposing yourself to no purpose. It was never for a moment my intention to meddle with any such dirty business; the thieves who started it will cut each other's throats quicker than honest men could do it for 'em. You may tell 'em that, with Judge Muhlbach's compliments! And say, too, that whenever the law, in its due course, brings one of them before me for judgment, — as I surely expect it will, — he shall then have an opportunity to learn the reasons that withheld me from — from — anticipating justice to-day!"

Warren looked at the old man, as he stood confronting him there, flushed with rage, broad-shouldered, massive, — and could not but admire the valiant show he made in the presence of disastrous defeat. Such a man, he thought, must have some good in him. He must have imagined himself faithful to a certain law of right, even in the midst of his iniquity. And, having carried his point, Warren had no desire to press his antagonist further, or to tear from him the last poor shreds of

self-respect, beneath which he strove so strenuously to conceal his collapse. Therefore, all he said was, "I think we unders-stand each other, Judge Muhl-bach!" and walked out of the room.

But at the door the Judge called him back. Warren turned, and was surprised to see his countenance, so lately working with passion, with a good-humored smile upon it.

"Mr. Bell," he said, "you have impaired my digestion, and you've made me break my pet jar; but I bear you no malice. I can recognize a good fellow when I see him, whether he stands in my way or not. You have done a difficult job in a gentlemanly manner, and I'm afraid I was a little boisterous. Well — in this world we must all make allowances for one another. And now, as our business is quite over, it would give me pleasure if you would accept one of these cigars; it will do you no harm, and — one good turn deserves another!"

"Very well," replied Warren, smiling a little also; "I'll take one on the grounds you mention; but if you please, I prefer to smoke m-my own."

"So be it: this will remain the longer to remind you of our interview," said the Judge, pleasantly; "and I wish you a very good day."

One other singular experience was in store for

Warren before he got out of the house. As he reached the foot of the stairs a servant came along the passage and opened the street door to admit two ladies. One of them was a stranger to Warren ; the other he recognized immediately. She saw him at the same moment, but, instead of stopping to speak to him, she instantly pulled down her veil, and, getting on the other side of her stout companion, glided by him without a word. Warren was so overcome with bewilderment, first at meeting her in that house, and in that part of the world, and then at her behavior, that he knew not what to do ; and consequently he found himself outside the house, with the door closed upon him, before he had made up his mind. After that, all circumstances considered, it was hardly possible to reënter ; and he walked down street like a man in a dream, repeating over and over to himself : —

“Nell Anthony in New York — and in that house ! — what the d-devil does it mean ?”

CHAPTER XII.

THE SENTIMENT OF LOVE.

WHILE Warren Bell had been mounting the ladder of ambition in New York, Nell Anthony had been imparting color and warmth to the thin minds of Hickory children. Upon the angular and juiceless scaffolding of arithmetic, geography, and grammar, which the spirit of New England calls education, she was attempting to train the rich flowers and graceful foliage of romance and poetry. It was a Quixotic aspiration, and could hardly achieve permanent or unequivocal success. Children, indeed, have a quicker appreciation of such things than their elders; but when they themselves become elders, the blossoms that sprouted so readily are apt to fade. Only when the cultivation is carried on to the second and third generation do the results begin to bear genuine fruit. But our average life is so vulgarized with action and effort, and so poor in repose and reflection, that the souls of our sons and daughters are liable to turn out almost as emaciated as our own.

In spite of these hard conditions Nell Anthony found the worst obstacles in her way to be caused by her success rather than by her failure. The children liked her, and were better pleased to listen to her stories and readings than to learn by heart the arid paragraphs of their utilitarian text-books. Accordingly they made themselves into knights, enchanters, ogres, and princesses, and sought for the location of fairy-land, instead of considering the boundaries and principal towns of their own State. In a word, they showed a tendency to enrich their emotions, instead of elaborating their brains; and the school board naturally began to take alarm. The school board entertained a kindly regard for Nell Anthony; but their regard for the welfare of the Republic was, of course, more serious. The Republic must be peopled by practical citizens, not by knights, princesses, and hobgoblins. Miss Anthony, therefore, received an intimation to this effect, softened by an assurance that her good intuitions were cordially recognized, and supplemented by the suggestion that she might, perhaps, feel disposed so to modify the tenor of her instruction as to produce effects more obviously useful.

Nell was perfectly aware, however, that any sharp-tongued, hack-brained, normal-school gradu-

ate was better qualified than she to furnish the pabulum which school children are supposed to require, and that if she were not allowed to follow her own intuitions she would better not meddle with the children at all; so she declined, with thanks, the kind offer of the Board, and bade farewell to her young amateur people of fairy-land. The Board felt relieved, and the fairy-land people dejected. How did Nell Anthony herself feel about it?

Had the affair occurred a few months earlier she would have been seriously disappointed. But these few months had made a change in her; and she had latterly been in doubt as to whether Hickory were any longer the place for her. Her life, ever since it began, had been mainly an instinctive one, — perhaps intuitive would be the fitter word; at any rate, she had simply dealt with things as they came to hand, without troubling herself about either causes or consequences. Her instinct had been to make people happy; and by intuition she perceived how this object might be realized. She had never thought about making herself happy, because happiness of a quiet but essential kind had never been lacking to her. This may have arisen from the spectacle of others' felicity, or it may have been a matter of temperament; she had no theory on the

subject. She was not conscious of sacrificing herself to any extent ; no question of sin or virtue was present in her mind. She followed the bent of her nature, and, so far, it had uniformly harmonized with the drift of her circumstances. "Duty" was a word she never used in relation to her own conduct, and if she understood the meaning of it it was only from hearsay or the dictionary. She was good, because being good gave her pleasure. Logically, therefore, if at any time she should find pleasure in being wicked, wicked she would be. But I am far from asserting that logic has any application in such a matter.

Her experience of love had borne an analogy to her lesser experiences. To love belonged to her age and complexion, and circumstances had made it natural to love Warren Bell. But there had been nothing self-conscious or deliberate in her passion. She had read no stories about love, and she did not — so to speak — know it by name. It was as original with her as with Eve, and meant, in her case, an exquisite pleasure felt in preferring another to herself and to all things, an impulse to give him whatever could add to his happiness, without thought of return or compensation. Had she been asked whether he loved her as she loved him, the question would

only have perplexed and distressed her ; any such consideration would have seemed to detract from the spontaneity and value of her own gift. All she thought of finding in him was a sympathy and appreciation which would lead him to accept and understand what she offered. For, though she was nothing in the balance, her love was of infinite worth ; and it was indispensable that he whom she loved should possess a corresponding capacity of reception. Nell never doubted Warren's capacity, and, of course, she idealized him. She took his heroism for granted, and believed him easily deserving of more than all she ascribed to him or could do for him.

As for kisses and embraces, they had ceased with childhood, and had not entered into her maiden meditations. Warren's long absences from home had rendered this transition easy. To an innocent and unhackneyed mind these things seem, as it were, an anticlimax to the pure passion ; being symbolic, they are on lower level than the thing symbolized. Doubtless, however, they possess a mystery and a magic of their own which transfigure them in their due time and season. But such enchantments are the revelation of experience, not of forecast ; and though that experience might await Nell Anthony, she would never anticipate it. There was a beauti-

ful refinement in her, which spiritualized her love in proportion to its ardor. The strongest love is never that which most depends upon its material phase, although (it need scarcely be added) sensuality itself is vapid and lethargic compared with the fire of a true love fittingly incarnate. Its aim is so far beyond any possible realization that the realization itself seems miraculous.

But circumstances, which had so long befriended Nell Anthony, enabling her to live in the present, and to find therein all desirable sustenance of life, at length assumed a hostile aspect. The death of her mother gave her, for the first time, a past and a future; and the event immediately following, in which Warren Bell was the chief actor, opened to her untrodden regions in her own soul. What he said to her compelled her to contemplate in broad daylight the delicate thoughts and virgin impulses which had hitherto lurked in the dewy shadows of her secret heart. This unspoken wonder and glory of her life turned out to be a thing reducible to words and phrases, — something which mankind had canvassed and discounted since the world began. It had what might be called a market-value, which Warren proposed to pay. This in itself would have caused a temporary shrinking-back in Nell, had this

been all. But her eyes, to which love lent penetration, saw in an instant the perfunctory undercurrent of Warren's speech. He did not need her, and he did not even want her; he felt a responsibility about her, and was intending to discharge it by making her his wife. The situation shocked her; she felt degraded without knowing why. Characteristically, she absolved Warren from all blame, and magnified his simple act into a colossal piece of self-abnegation. Nevertheless, when the affair was over, she could not settle herself as before. The idea of herself as Warren's wife kept recurring to her imagination, and often made her cheeks burn. It cast back a light upon her state of mind towards him during recent years, and forced her to read it in a new sense. Her case was somewhat analogous to that of a child who has found a splendid crystal, and has admired it for its beauty, when suddenly informed that the crystal is a diamond worth a kingdom. It is not more beautiful; in some respects, perhaps it is less so; but it has an effect and a significance altogether different from formerly.

For a while the new feelings contended within her, ousting and replacing the old ones, and when at last she had recognized and accepted them she was no longer the same as before. She felt nearer to

the great world which she had never seen, — she felt herself a woman. Warren did not love her, and of course never would do so ; but that could not diminish her love for him. She loved him more, because she now understood what her love meant. And she was aware of a depth and strength in herself that called for more arduous work to do. For the first time she began to reflect, and to act upon her reflections. She thought of Warren plunging into the dangers and duties of the world, and she longed to behold his career, partly from fear that harm might come to him, and partly from her profound sympathy with all that appertained to him. True, she had refused him for the reason, among others, that she feared to be a clog upon him ; but a wife is one thing, and an interested spectator, with the ability to lend a hand if needed, is another. The only question was, how she could so place herself as to fulfil these conditions. And to this question all her reflections did not yield an answer.

A girl thoroughly ignorant of the world is, indeed, apt greatly to underrate its perils and difficulties, and to magnify her own power to deal with them. But Nell Anthony had a native good sense, which, in some measure, served instead of experience ; and it withheld her from committing a crude folly at this

juncture. She perceived, without being told, that a girl destitute of protectors of any kind, without introductions and without conventional training, could not expediently establish herself in New York. She might, of course, apply to Warren Bell, — except that this was the very thing she most devoutly desired to avoid. That he should be aware of her presence would be fatal to the essence of her plan; and her most besetting dread was lest New York should prove too small to hide her from him. The cap of invisibility, about which she had so often told her school-children, would have suited her requirements exactly; she wanted to help him, protect him, and be with him, without his knowing anything about it. But the cap was not forthcoming, and she seemed chained to Hickory. The little village had been a pleasant and sufficient home to her heretofore; but, now that she wished to leave it, and could not, it seemed like the closest and most stifling of prisons.

In addition to the motives directly concerning Warren, there was another, derived from these, but more obviously affecting herself. She wished to be employed about something that should influence a wider and more important circle than could be reached in Hickory. Till now she had been content to help

her mother and tell stories to children ; but Warren's ambition had aroused a kindred fire in her own heart. It was not a rivalry, however ; it was a sympathy, a kind of development of the sentiment *noblesse oblige*. If Warren became great it was incumbent upon her, as his feminine counterpart, to seek a corresponding elevation in her own sphere. He would never know her aim ; but that made no difference in her sense of obligation. She acted from a sense of justice and equality, — the justice and equality of love. All this indicates that Nell Anthony was still in a great measure under the dominion of sentiment ; the true, substantial passion of love had not as yet been fully kindled in her, with its jealousies, its ecstasies, and its despairs. That too, might come, if circumstances so ordained ; but if not, she might go on to the end governing her life by abstractions and ideal fancies, and never comprehending either her loss or her gain.

Meanwhile, she was no nearer making her escape from Hickory than ever ; and, since her restlessness increased with every passing day, there was danger that she would finally overcome discretion, and spread her wings at any cost. Fortunately, however, things were not brought quite to that pass. Towards the end of summer she received a letter —

the most unexpected, and yet the most matter-of-course of all letters — which solved all her difficulties in five minutes, and made going to New York a mere matter of buying a railroad ticket. This seemed to Nell Anthony the turning point of her existence, and almost as if Warren had stretched forth a hand to her in greeting.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUSAN WAYNE.

THE letter was from Susan Wayne, and contained an invitation to Nell Anthony to come and stay with her in New York. Susan had just heard of Mrs. Anthony's death.

This Susan had formerly been one of Nell's school-mates. She came of a family which had resided in Hickory, but had removed thence ten years before. Susan was an amiable and excellent girl, not very clever, but admirably conscientious; and she was the complaisant and uncomplaining object of all manner of practical jokes on the part of her school-fellows. Nell was the only one who took no share in the popular pastime; and she and Susan became, as a consequence, intimate friends. Susan was considerably the elder in years, though not in intelligence; she was often indebted to Nell for an insight into her lessons. Being of a redundantly grateful disposition she never forgot these services; and when she left Hickory she was very strenuous in making arrangements for a profuse and permanent

correspondence. And, if the correspondence failed somewhat of being either diurnal or eternal, it was not Susan's fault. For nearly a year she wrote almost as much and as often as one of the characters in Richardson's novels. But Nell was almost as reticent on paper as in speech; her letters were very short, and there were not many of them. Nevertheless, communications continued to be sent and received at irregular and decreasing intervals, until Susan met Professor Wayne, of Dartmouth, and was married to him. He was twenty years her elder; but he knew what he was about, and she made him an unexceptionable wife. Her facility with the pen now found ample exercise, for she attended to all his voluminous correspondence, copied out his lectures, and wrote reams of foolscap at his dictation. She delighted in this drudgery, but it left her little or no leisure for her own concerns. They moved to New York (the professor was quite a wealthy man), and Susan lost sight of her friend, though she remembered her just as affectionately as ever. Five years had passed, during which Nell had not heard from Mrs. Wayne, and, to tell the truth, had not devoted much thought to her. So this letter from her descended like a small thunderbolt out of a clear sky.

The letter-paper had a black border, and it appeared that Susan had lately had the misfortune to lose her excellent professor. He had died, as a philosopher should, of a suffusion on the brain, in the midst of composing a monumental work on the Application of Electricity to Idiots. He had left his wife an interminable assortment of manuscripts, chiefly in her own handwriting, but of the purport of which she knew next to nothing; a large and valuable library, which she would never read; a comfortable home, a good deal too large for her; and about twenty thousand a year in United States bonds, which she was somewhat at a loss how to spend. But, if her intelligence was limited, her energy and benevolence were great; and it did not take her long to decide that she ought to regard herself as but the steward of the bulk of this fortune, which should be applied to the amelioration of the condition of her less fortunate fellow-mortals. Such warm-hearted persons as Susan Wayne, unless constantly checked by special dispensations of Providence, are apt to be among the most dangerous, because the most unconscious, antagonists of civilization. Susan, taking counsel with herself how to do good, bade fair to become destructive beyond the average, until, by a special dispensation

of Providence, she accidentally received intelligence of Mrs. Anthony's death, and immediately conceived the idea of getting her old friend Nell to come and live with her, and take part in her great scheme for social benefaction and improvement.

"She must be so lonely," exclaimed Susan to herself; "and I'm sure this is just the kind of thing she needs to make her happy. Nell and I always agreed about everything."

In fact, the moment Nell received the invitation, she made up her mind to accept it. It would give her a home in New York, and independence (for her own income, modest though it was, would suffice to relieve her from the embarrassments of Susan's riches), and it would bring her into just the position most convenient for her designs towards Warren. Warren and Susan were quite unknown to each other, and there was no probability that the circles of society in which they severally moved would have any point of contact. Nell's obscurity would be equal to his conspicuousness, and their mutual relation would be like that of a spectator in the auditorium to an actor on the stage: the former can observe the latter's every motion, while himself remaining indistinguishable in the crowd. Nor, had the choice been offered her, could she have

selected a companion more congenial to her humor than Susan Wayne. Susan was talkative, Nell was silent; Susan was restless, Nell was quiet; Susan was impulsive, Nell was deliberate. They came, as it were, from opposite points of the compass; but they could only moderate each other, — never wear each other out. They would each be all the better for a little flavoring of the other. It was a thoroughly wholesome comradeship.

Nell was not long in making her preparations. She packed up such of her belongings as she did not care to be separated from, and rented the house and farm upon comfortable terms. Her adieus were easily said, and did not convey the idea that she was to be very long absent, — indeed, that was a matter concerning which she herself was entirely uncertain. But it seemed to her as if she were going very far; for distance is less a matter of miles than of novelty. The next world is said to be all around us, if not within us; but most people would consider it a long journey.

Nell travelled by way of Albany, and came down the Hudson, not possessing culture enough, perhaps, to prefer the Boston route. And when, at last, she rolled into the Grand Central Depot, and followed the exuding stream of passengers down the aisle of

the car, and out on the platform, behold, there was the broad, hospitable smile of her friend awaiting her, which immediately resolved itself into hearty kisses, which the traveller cordially returned.

Susan had a carriage in waiting, and they drove to her house; but the conversation on the way, though animated, was not of general interest; besides, owing to the clattering of the streets in her unwonted ears, Nell was unable to hear half the questions that her friend asked her. She thought Susan notably changed in appearance, but inwardly much the same as before; her mind had not essentially matured. She had expanded, however, from a dumpy and awkward girl of fifteen into a broad-shouldered, blooming woman of five-and-twenty, weighing near two hundred pounds, and effervescing all over with little enthusiasms, astonishments, and admirations. She was stuffed so full of good-nature, that, had this element been eliminated from her, there would have been little but skin and bone left. She was not a beauty, though her features had no especial fault, and their expression was beyond criticism. She was very rosy, very wide across the face, and her hair of a reddish, sandy hue, was of somewhat scanty growth, and was smoothed down close to her head. She wore diamond ear-rings in her little

round ears, and on a finger of one of her fat, reddish hands she wore two rings, one given to her by the professor before their marriage, and one — a plain gold one — on the occasion of that ceremony. Her dress and bonnet, like Nell's, were black, but much more sumptuous than the latter's in matter of fringes and trappings. These, and other details, Nell had opportunity to notice before the carriage drew up at the door of a handsome brick house on a side street, and Susan exclaimed, "Well, here we are, at home!"

Not being accustomed to think aloud, Nell did not express in words, whatever surprise and curiosity the interior of this strange house, with its novel appointments and ways, may have inspired her with, — she did not even ask her hostess whether she always dined in the evening instead of the middle of the day; but ate what was given to her with a good appetite, and confined her speech to answering the questions which still continued to bubble up out of the inexhaustible Susan. These questions need not be repeated here, for Susan did not belong to the Socratic school of interrogators; she inquired about such unphilosophic matters as where Nell got her lunch, how she liked the Palisades, whether New York came up to her expectations, and so forth. As

to New York, Nell might have answered, that it satisfied her in one way, — that it was large enough to conceal her effectually from Warren Bell. She actually said nothing of the kind, however ; she had never said anything about her love-romance to any one, and was not inclined to begin her confidences just now. She showed Susan just so much of her mind as Susan expected to see, and kept the rest to herself.

“We are going to have a perfectly splendid time,” observed Susan, at last ; “and it will all be owing to you ; at least, I’m sure I couldn’t manage anything properly without you. You dear girl, it does my heart good to see you, sitting there so quiet and handsome, and so like your old self, — or your young self, I suppose I ought to say. Just think, ten years ago ! What perfect children we were ! But when we are together, I don’t feel hardly a bit changed, — do you ? Of course, the death of my dear husband made a great change for me, and I’m sure I never can get over it ; for, though he was so much older than I, we were the most perfect companions, and he was just as playful and youthful as a boy, in his leisure times. We were so happy,” she added, wiping her kind little eyes, “and I do wish you could have known him, Nell ! I’m sure you would have admired him, and he would

have fallen quite in love with you ; any man would do that, though, if you gave him a chance. I used to be sorry sometimes that I wasn't handsome, for his sake ; but he didn't mind, he used to take everything in the sweetest way. I do believe he was the wisest and best man in the world, and I only wish I could have understood more what he was doing,—his works, you know. He had the most magnificent plans ; and it would have been a great thing for the world if he could have lived to carry them out. I dare say you might understand something about his manuscripts if you were to look them over ; they must be very interesting, and there's enough of them, almost, to fill a room. Perhaps we'll look them over some day, and you might be able to edit some of them for the press. I'm sure I shall envy you if you do ! But what I thought of occupying myself with, the rest of my life is something very different from that, and more suited to my scope, as my dear husband used to call it ; though, to be sure, when I began to look it up, I found it was not nearly so easy as I had supposed, and then I didn't know what I should do, until you came into my head, dear, and then I was sure it would be all right, for you always know how to manage everything."

"If it's a farm, perhaps I might," said Nell; "but I don't know much else."

"Well, it isn't a farm," replied Susan, "though I'm sure I wish it could be connected with a farm in some way: it would be so much nicer for the poor women; but I suppose it will have to be somewhere in New York, or very near, else none of them would find out about it; and of course it's very important that it should be easy for them to get at, you know. But then one difficulty was, that land in the city is so expensive; and, though my husband was quite well off, there wasn't enough to do more than a very little. But I spoke about it to Uncle Joseph (I call him uncle, though really he's only the brother of my husband's brother's wife; but he's the best man in New York, and can do anything in politics and such things; and you know everything is done by politics here, though I'm sure I don't know how); well, so Uncle Joseph was just as kind and good as he could be about it, and took the greatest interest in it, as he always does about anything to benefit unfortunate people, — all the poor unfortunate people in New York know him and love him, though he has enemies, I believe; but they must be very wicked people; — well, and so he said that the best way to do would be to get the legisla-

ture to do something, and make the city give us the land, and let us have an appropriation (he called it) to help build the house ; and then what remained to do wouldn't be so very expensive."

"What is it you are going to do?" Nell inquired. "Is it a hospital?"

"Oh! to be sure, I haven't told you yet, have I? But I'm coming to it; only I never seem able to tell a thing straight, as other people do. You see, the way I first came to think of it was this: When I was married, my husband said I must have a lady's-maid to help me with my toilet, and do all sorts of little special things for me; so I advertised for one in the newspapers, and you've no idea, Nell, how many people came, — and most of them were the strangest creatures, — I'm sure I didn't know there were such in the world. But at last one came, and she was very nice indeed, and quite lady-like; she was just what I wanted, and I thought I was very lucky to get her. She was about twenty, and quite good-looking, with bright-brown hair and blue eyes; and just as neat and quiet and well-behaved as she could be. She was English, and she told me she was the daughter of a physician in London, and he was interested in some speculation here, and came over to see about it;

and then he died, and everything went wrong, and she was left to do the best she could for herself. Well, I engaged her, of course, and she couldn't have suited me better if I'd hunted all over America for her; she knew all I wanted without my having to tell her; and, really, she knew a great deal more than I did about things that belong to a lady's dress and establishment, and all that. You know the English are brought up to understand those things more thoroughly than we are, or than I was, at any rate. We were more like friends than like mistress and maid, and I got so fond of her I'd have done anything for her; and she had some friends here, — people that her father used to know, — and she used to go to see them once in a while, and sometimes she would ask me if she might stay all night, and of course I always let her. I suppose I ought to have been more careful about her, she was so young and so pretty; and I always say that it was my fault more than hers; but, however it was, I noticed at last that she was very low-spirited, and I asked her about it, and for a long time she put me off; but at last she burst into tears, and then it all came out. I declare, I was so sorry, I didn't know what to do!" exclaimed Susan; and two tears ran down her broad cheeks as she spoke.

Nell looked at her friend with a grave sympathy, and by an involuntary movement showed that she understood the nature of the trouble. The color slowly deepened in her sensitive face. "What became of her?" she asked.

"He had promised to marry her; but he was a good-for-nothing wretch!" exclaimed Susan vehemently. "At first I wanted to have her stay with me; but my husband said that would not do, and the poor girl herself wanted to be away somewhere. So then I set to work to find an establishment where she could go. I visited a good many of them, and I suppose they are managed as well as could be expected; but, oh, dear! they made my heart ache. At a time like that a woman ought to feel that she is cared for, if ever she is to feel so, in the world; for they have their punishment all the rest of their lives. But it was all so business-like, and mechanical, and mathematical, — and you know I never could bear mathematics! So at last I just hired a room and a nurse for her, and went myself to see her as often as I could. Well, my dear, when the baby was born, it lived only a few days. There! I always — act like a fool — when I — think of it. One hears so often about such things, and always it seems as if the woman must be so wicked; but I'm

sure there's something to be said on the other side. And a dear little baby, Nell, — think of it? Oh, if I could only have had a little baby like that! Isn't it strange how things go? A baby would have been such a blessing to me, and it was nothing but ruin and disgrace to her. It does seem to me sometimes as if God might have changed things a little."

It had never occurred to Nell to question God's wisdom; religion was not an intellectual question with her. "Perhaps such things will be better when the world is better," she said.

"We offered to send the poor girl home to her friends," continued Susan, "but she wouldn't go; she said she had no friend now but me. She went out West finally, — there was an opening there, — and I have never heard of her since. But the reason I told you all this was because I wanted you to know what made me first think of establishing some kind of place here where women who have been unfortunate could go, and be taken care of nicely, as if they were at home. And I thought it should be not for the poor sort of women, but for the better class, — the well-educated, lady-like ones; for their suffering is so much greater, their shame and all that; and (though it isn't always thought so) I believe their temptations are often greater and

more difficult, too. And, besides, there are plenty of places already for the poorer classes, but none especially for the other; and that is one reason, perhaps, why they so often commit greater crimes to conceal or escape from the first one. I'm sure I pity them all just alike; but one has to choose whom one will help, you know."

"Are there so many?" said Nell, in a musing tone.

"But if Uncle Joseph can only do what he expects for us we shall be sure to succeed; and then, my dear, what I hope is that you will give me advice, and not let me do anything wrong or foolish, because you always know what is best and right; and you can arrange everything in an orderly and nice way, when I should only make a muddle if I were left to myself. I'll do the working part, I mean, but you give the directions what shall be done, and how to do it. Do you think you'd like to help? or shouldn't you care for it?"

"I should care for it. I will help all I can." said Nell Anthony, with warmth. "I can't do much, — you are mistaken about that, — but I can do something, and with all my heart."

"Then it's all right; and to-morrow, or as soon as you are rested, we'll go and see Uncle Joseph" —

"Who is he?" Nell asked.

"Oh, of course! His name is Muhlbach, — Judge Muhlbach; but I'm so in the habit of calling him Uncle Joseph that I never think of that. I want you to like him as much as I do, Nell, — and I'm sure you will, — because you're both so good."

CHAPTER XIV.

BENEVOLENCE.

THEY did not see Judge Muhlbach, or Uncle Joseph, for some weeks, for he was away on business at Albany when they called, and was afterwards much occupied with his duties on the Compensation Fund Commission. During this interval Nell Anthony made some progress towards getting acquainted with New York. She and Susan went anywhere they liked, Susan's physical aspect being ample protection against all ordinary perils, and, if anything was really to happen, Nell's courage and resources were to be relied on to grapple with it. No mishaps occurred, however, and the two friends enjoyed themselves greatly. Nell liked to ride on the elevated railroad as much as anything else, especially on the lofty portions beyond the upper end of the park, which always caused the robust Susan to turn pale. Susan was fond of shopping, and of driving up and down the avenue; and Nell accompanied her with pleasure, though she could never rid herself of an apprehension that she might run

across Warren Bell. As a matter of fact she saw him twice. Once he got out of a car, on the "elevated," just as she was getting into another.

She fancied he looked grave and rather depressed. He had a newspaper in his hand, and was too much preoccupied to see her. The other time he was talking to a stylishly-dressed young man on the steps of the Exchange Club ; and Nell did not like the looks of his companion at all. Warren was evidently very busy about something. Nell wondered whether, among all his thoughts, he ever had a thought about her.

One day Susan said that Uncle Joseph had written her that he would be at home all the afternoon, and had something to say about her affair. It was nearly three o'clock when they set out ; and, the distance being inconsiderable, they went on foot instead of taking the carriage. As the door opened in response to Susan's ring, Nell, who entered behind her friend, saw a man's figure advancing towards her down the hall. She was so startled at this apparition that, for a moment, she forgot to pull down her veil, and the effort she made to conceal herself behind Susan's ample back served only to draw the young man's attention to her. After a momentary hesitation, however, he

went on, and the door was closed. Nell had bitten her upper lip smartly, but no other disaster had happened. Whether or not he had recognized her she could not decide; his near-sightedness may have prevented it, at least in so far as to make him think he had made a mistake. But, while Nell's cheeks were tingling with the agitation of the episode, she could not help perceiving the absurd artificiality of the circumstances which rendered a meeting between her and Warren Bell like an encounter between enemies who had vowed never to speak to each other. It was her own doing; but, though she acknowledged the folly of it, she could not bring herself to be wiser. In the midst of her disturbance she found something annoying in the almost obtrusive unconsciousness of the blameless Susan.

Judge Muhlbach, or Uncle Joseph, received the ladies with a genial courtesy, which culminated in kissing Susan's cheek; and perhaps it was only something in Nell's expression that deprived her of a similar testimony of good-will. He apologized for the presence of tobacco-smoke in the room with a mental arraignment, perhaps, of the unkind destiny which seemed set upon defrauding him of a consolatory cigar. He addressed some complimentary remarks, of an elderly avuncular flavor, to Nell;

and then, turning to Susan, he proceeded to the business of the meeting.

"I am pleased to inform you, Susie, my dear, that your benevolent designs are in a fair way to be realized, and much more promptly than might have been expected. The Peter and Paul Society, occupying a building in the north-west part of the island, has lately become insolvent (owing, I presume, to over-indulgence in the principle of robbing Peter to pay Paul), and their premises are for sale or to let. I should recommend renting them for a term of years, with privilege of renewal, and, perhaps, option of purchase. The house has ample accommodation for a beginning, and could be enlarged; it commands a view of the North river, and stands in its own enclosed grounds. Immediate possession. But you can see for yourself," added the Judge, handing over the memorandum from which he had been reading. "Now, why wouldn't that do for us?" he asked; "or shall we look farther?"

"I'm sure there couldn't be anything nicer," exclaimed Susan; "don't you think so, Nell?"

"What is the rent?" Nell inquired, turning her eyes on the Judge.

"Ah! now here we have a practical head; I like that," he rejoined, with a smile and a nod. "And

that brings me to a proposition I was about to make. What sum had you thought of as an endowment of this enterprise, Susie?"

"Oh! would a hundred thousand dollars be any good?" returned that lady.

"Well, I should say so!" cried Uncle Joseph, chuckling. "What says Miss Anthony? But I ought to tell you, my dear, that such an endowment will lay you open, in some quarters, to the charge of being a crank. However, passing by that for the moment, and coming to my proposition, there is no necessity for your bearing so large a proportion of the financial burdens. What you want, I take it, is to obtain control of the concern, — to have its management in your hands, and to order things according to your own good pleasure. But to do all that a hundred thousand dollars is not necessary, nor the half of it. Why not allow a number of other ladies of position and means to associate themselves with you, each contributing amounts which will be relatively small, but the aggregate of which will exceed any possible individual donation? The institution would thus be placed upon an impregnable pecuniary basis, and would leave you with plenty of money to carry out any details which might strike your fancy, — say, in the furnishing of

rooms, the adornment of the grounds, and so on. I know a number of good women who would be proud to be connected with such a scheme, and whose companionship and counsel you would, I think, often find pleasant and useful. I myself," added Uncle Joseph, leaning back in his chair, and placing his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, "would claim the privilege of contributing ten thousand dollars, — not in my own name, for I have not the good fortune to belong to your sex, ladies, — but in that of my married sister. And I need not add that whatever business or legal matters may incidentally arise I should wish to regard as falling within my especial province."

Susan looked at Nell with a beaming smile. "Didn't I tell you he was the best man in the world?" she said, with an air of unlimited satisfaction.

Nell looked down and colored.

"Miss Anthony is not going to commit herself too soon," said Uncle Joseph, with an amiable chuckle. "But, seriously, my dear young lady, if you have any suggestion, you would best show your good disposition, in the matter by making it with all possible explicitness."

"I will say what I think if you wish it," said

Nell, looking up. "It seemed to me that this institution is not likely ever to have a great many inmates. It was not to be for poor women, you know, but for persons who have been brought up more as you and I have, Susan. For a long time, perhaps, — until it gets to be well known, — there will be hardly any one. So we do not need a large place, — not at first, at any rate, — not larger than you might support by yourself, Susan. And if other ladies contribute, though it might give them no legal right to interfere with you, I think you would find yourself less free than you would like. By and by, if people really came to take an interest in it, they would leave bequests to it in their wills. But I think, if I were you, I would not accept money from any one if it puts you under any kind of obligation to them."

"Miss Anthony would have it a close corporation, I see," remarked Uncle Joseph, lifting his thick eyebrows humorously. "And, upon my word, my dear young lady, now that I have heard your statement, I am inclined to agree with you. To tell you the truth," he added, smiling, "I was a little bit anxious about Susan. Yes, Susie, I shall make a clean breast of it. I was afraid that if you set out to run this thing alone you would get into

deep water, and I thought the best thing I could do for you would be to get a dozen or so first-class women to step in and take a hand with you, and pull you through the tight places. But, now that I have had the pleasure of making Miss Anthony's acquaintance, I am disposed to reconsider my judgment. Miss Anthony," continued he, turning upon the quiet New England girl the full refulgence of his metropolitan geniality, "has got a mind and will of her own, which quite relieves me from my pre-occupation. I'll venture to say, Susie dear, that you will be perfectly safe as long as she stands by you. And her remarks are just in themselves, besides. The — ah — attendance is not likely to be overwhelmingly large (having in view the peculiar conditions) for some time to come. That is a fact which had not been sufficiently brought under my attention before. Then we will consider the Peter-and-Paul scheme off?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Susan, much perplexed to find herself even within a measurable distance of being called on to decide between two persons, both of whom had her entire confidence. "But I do hope, Uncle Joseph, she continued, detecting an avenue of compromise, "that you will attend to all our business for us, whatever happens.

What you say about Nell is all true, and she was just as wise and splendid when we were at school together ten years ago. But she isn't a lawyer after all, nor a politician either; and I'm sure there are a great many important things that we could never get right without your help. You will be with us whatever happens, won't you?"

"Well, well, my dear, you know how devoted I am to you; but how can I tell," said the Judge, archly, "whether Miss Nell doesn't include me in her suspicions of intermeddlers? Perhaps she thinks I am plotting to get the reins in my own hands, and intend to administer the place for my personal ends — eh?"

"I have no suspicions of wrong in any one," said Nell, simply. "But Susan is my friend, and I wanted to help her think."

"And I will make bold to tell you, though on so short an acquaintance, that your friendship is a thing worth having," exclaimed the Judge, bending towards her and speaking with emphasis. Then, changing his tone, he added, with a smile, "And I hope, in the course of time, you will think me not unworthy of a little of it. Well, now, Susie, for the present our affairs are in suspense. But I expect I shall have some new ideas in a few days."

In fact I'm hardly up to concert-pitch this afternoon. Just before you came in I had been set upon by a rascal who — ah — wanted to beg or bully me into countenancing a nefarious transaction, and he succeeded in vexing me so much as to spoil the good effects of my luncheon."

"Oh! I remember now, we met a person in the hall," said Susan; "that must have been he. Was he a rascal? He looked quite gentlemanly."

"That is just where the rascals get ahead of the honest men," said the Judge, chuckling. "However, there are many worse fellows than he about."

Susan and Nell had both risen while the latter sentences were being spoken, and were standing near the door, Nell being on the threshold. The Judge now stepped forward and bestowed upon Susan a farewell kiss, and looking past her he encountered the eyes of Nell fixed full upon him. It was such a look as scarcely, in all his varied career, the learned Judge had been called upon to sustain; it actually flashed with concentrated indignation and scorn. The poor old gentleman was the more taken aback, insomuch as he was utterly at a loss to account for this sudden appearance of resentment; he would not have expected a quarter as much if he had kissed Nell Anthony instead of Susan Wayne. In-

deed, he had a moment before been inwardly debating the feasibility of marking in some such way his admiration and approval of Susan's friend ; but the purpose was shrivelled up like straw in a furnace. He recovered himself enough to say, " And good day to you, Miss Anthony ! " and then he was left alone.

" Isn't he perfectly lovely ? " cried Susan, as she and Nell emerged into the outer air.

Nell, by putting a constraint upon herself, managed to make no reply. She was not in a humor for eulogy, though she was in capital trim for action, had there been anything to do ; and she thought to herself that there was likely to be something to do, before long, in the way of protecting Warren Bell against respectable villains, who called him " rascal " behind his back.

Meanwhile, the respectable villain in question, after taking a few turns up and down the room, had arrived at the conclusion that he must have misinterpreted Miss Anthony's expression, — at any rate, so far as any reference to himself was concerned. And as, with a sigh, he lit his long-deferred cigar, he murmured half aloud, " What a monstrous good-looking little thing she is ! and as smart as a steel trap, too ! Why, she saw through the whole game in a moment ! By the Lord, she would be worth

ten thousand dollars to any man with the grit to capture her! Well, I must get her alone some day, and then we'll see!"

There are few spectacles more pathetic than the infatuation of the wise.

CHAPTER XV.

TOM PEEKSKILL.

ONE morning late in the autumn Tom Peekskill, on his way down town, stopped in at the Exchange Club to look in his letter-box. He took out of it a square envelope, of rough blue paper addressed in a female hand. He opened it, and, still standing before the box, glanced through the contents, which seemed to occasion him no particular delight.

In the midst of his reading some one laid a hand upon his shoulder. Tom started very perceptibly, crumpling the letter up in his hand. When he saw that the hand belonged to his little friend, Bob Austin, he asked him, rather sulkily, what the devil he meant by acting like a sheriff?

"What do you mean by jumping like a bank-cashier?" retorted Bob, laughing loudly. "I say, Tom, old man, I and four others are going to take the drag at two o'clock this afternoon, and tool it out to Scratchit's. Things there will be down to a fine point. You know the racket, you old Turk!

You will just make up the half dozen. Two o'clock, from the Brunswick."

"D—it, what a nuisance!" cried Tom, peevishly. "Well, I can't go, that's the amount of it. I've got to meet a fellow at three o'clock on partic'lar business. Just my luck!"

"Got to meet a fellow, eh?" said the other, winking his little fat eye. "Oh, come off, do! Does she always write to you on blue note-paper? Don't be exclusive — bring her along! always room for one more!"

"Go to the devil, will you?" replied Tom.

"No use; you must set 'em up; it's a fair catch!" Bob declared. "Mine's a smash; what's yours?"

"Set 'em up for yourself, if you like, you little whisky-skin, you! but count me out; I've got business, sure enough, and I don't drink till it's over." And, in spite of protestations, Tom left his small friend, and continued his journey towards Wall street. As he walked along he tore the blue letter into small pieces, which he kept in his hand until he came to a belated ash-barrel, into which he dropped them.

"It is a nuisance, and no mistake!" he muttered to himself. "This is the second time I've been

done out of a good spree, and it's sure to be about some nonsense. I do wish the blessed creature had more brains! If I was a fashionable doctor it couldn't be worse."

Early in the afternoon he left his office, and took a car up-town. He lived in an apartment-building not far from Union Square. The suites comprised from four to seven rooms each, and were expensively got up. They were occupied chiefly by single men, though there were also one or two families, which bestowed a useful respectability upon the place. Tom's sitting-room was pervaded by a reminiscent odor of good cigars; the walls were adorned with foils and boxing-gloves, and with a few theatrical portraits. A Turkey rug covered the floor; there were a comfortable sofa and two or three lounging-chairs. There was an open fireplace, in which a coal fire was burning. Tom, on entering, only stayed long enough to make some changes in his dress, and then sallied forth again to a neighboring livery-stable, where he kept his horse. Ten minutes later he was mounted, and on his way to the park; but, instead of going by Fifth avenue, he chose another route, two or three blocks farther to the left, as if to avoid meeting any one. By three o'clock he had reached the junction of Eighth avenue

and Seventy-second street, and there he halted, and looked eastward. In a few moments there appeared, cantering down the street, a roan horse, with a young lady on his back. She wore a blue veil tied over her face; but of course Tom knew her. The blue veil was not put on for him. He turned his horse, and they rode westward side by side.

"Well, little Betsy," said he, with a jocose air, "here I am, you see. What's the good word to-day?"

"Don't speak that way," she replied. "I'm very unhappy."

"Unhappy! What about, pray? Married folks must expect to have their little crosses, and" —

"Yes; but" — she interrupted, and stopped.

"And, as I was going to say, we must begin to get in training for" —

"Tom," she interrupted him again, "unless you do something soon I shall do something that you'll call desperate. I can't bear it much longer. You don't know how it is. I keep thinking and thinking all the time; and I never used to think, I only used to enjoy myself. I believe you like to make me miserable."

"Now, little Betsy, don't be stupid. You know it would spoil our game if we were to hunt up a

parson before the time comes. As it is, I have the old man under my thumb, though he don't know it yet. If we were out and out spliced, all our trumps would be out, and it's a hundred to one he'd wash his hands of you, and knock me higher than a kite. But as it is we're safe. Oh, trust me! I know the world! If I don't strike him for a million at least, I'm a fool! and I'll make my perquisites off the other side too. Oh, I'll keep you in grand style, don't you fear!"

"You said, last spring, Tom, that, if I'd elope with you, it would make everything all right. And I said I would. And then we didn't elope at all. And now, when it's so different from anything I ever thought of, you say we mustn't get married yet, else it will be all wrong. I don't see how two opposite things can both be true. I think the real truth is, that I have loved you too much and you don't love me any longer, and you're just putting me off, and putting me off. I may be foolish, Tom, but I'm a woman; and, if you take all my hope away, I can make you sorry, and I will!"

"Now, look here, Betsy," said Tom reining his horse nearer to her, and settling his hat on his head, "I'm going to talk straight to you. I know you're no fool, and to prove it I'll show you just how I'm

fixed. As to what I said last spring, that was all right then ; but circumstances changed it. It was my fault, of course, that it was changed ; I never said it wasn't ; and all I can say is I never intended it ; but a man as much in love as I — am, will sometimes run away with himself. Well, then, we had to look out for what was the best thing for ourselves ; and, as it turned out, this accident made our case even stronger than it was before. He might have kicked me out, as his son-in-law, but if I say to him that, unless he does so and so, I won't be his son-in-law, he'll come down like a coon ! A man like him is about as tender-hearted as a boa-constrictor ; but, rather than be disgraced, they'd kneel down and kiss your boots, — when there's no one looking on."

"I don't see what makes you hate my father so ; he's done you nothing but good, and helped you every way ; and he's a gentleman, and my father, and is always kind to me ; and every time he's kind to me it makes me feel more wicked and ashamed. Why do you want to injure him ? Why can't we just be married, and tell him that we love each other, and want him to forgive us ? He would, I know ; and then it would all be happy, instead of dangerous and miserable, as it is now."

"Just wait till I get through," said Tom, taking

his whip in his right hand and gesticulating with the butt of it, "and then you'll see the whole thing just as I do. The way it began was this: When I was a young fellow, without much sense, and very little of anything else, and was picking up whatever jobs I could on the street, I happened to hear of a big point. There was a stock that was going down like a stone rolling off the roof of a house, and everybody was unloading like mad; but my point was, that the stock would be up again above par in two days. If I could buy a few hundred of that stock right off I was a made man. But I hadn't any cash, and, what was worse, being a new man, without any backing, I hadn't any credit. Well, just as I was cursing my luck, and ready to sell my skin for a couple of thousand dollars, along came a fellow with a big roll of greenbacks in his hand, and wanted me to buy some grain for him. I counted his money. There was just two thousand dollars — no more and no less. I asked him how soon he wanted his grain? He said he was in no particular hurry, — I might take the best of the market in the next three days. I took his money, gave him a receipt, and told him that in three days I'd be ready for him. Then I did the silliest thing I ever did before or since: I went

and looked at my stock, made up my mind it was as low as it could get (it was at twenty-one), and I bought my two thousand dollars' worth then and there, with the other fellow's money. Of course I expected to make it all right with him when the rise came. But I hadn't more than made my purchase when some one tapped me on the shoulder, and I looked round, and there was my man. 'I've changed my mind about that grain,' he said, 'and I'll take my money back.' Well, I felt pretty sick, but I brassed it out, and told him he'd have to wait till the third day, according to agreement. He didn't kick as much as I expected, but he sort of looked at me in a queer way, and, says he, 'Very well; in three days, then,' and walked off. I didn't quite like the aspect of things; but I made up my mind I'd be all right the next day, and thought no more of him. Next day, sure enough, my stock began to go up like a balloon, and was at forty before you could turn round. I knew it would touch at least three times that, and I went off quietly and got my lunch. When I came back, the stock was falling again; some big men, they said, had been unloading, in face of the rise. I thought it must be a temporary dodge, and I waited. Down it went, touched twenty-one, passed it, and was at

ten before half-past two o'clock. Then I saw my game was up ; but before I could sell out, eight was the best I could get. I was a ruined man, and worse than that, for I had to meet my grain man the next day. I thought of jumping off the end of a pier, and various things ; but the end of it was, I met him. And then I found out who he was. That man was Seth Drayton, your father. He was the man who was engineering the stock I invested in. He suspected me of knowing too much, and, to make sure, he gave me that two thousand dollars for grain. When he saw he had me hooked he just checked the rise, and made me out a swindler. It cost him nothing ; he could afford to hold over a day ; but it spoilt me. Well, he talked to me that day as I wouldn't talk to a dog, and told me, what I knew well enough, that he had only to speak ten words and I'd be in *quod*, and never able to show my face on the street again. I was only waiting till he got through to put a bullet into his head and then into my own ; and there have been times, since then, when I wish I'd done it. But, all of a sudden, he turned round, and said he'd let up on me on one condition. The amount of it was, if I'd be his puppet, and do and say just what he ordered, and belong to him body and soul, he'd say no more

about what had happened, and would take care that I had plenty to live on. It was hard lines ; but I was down on my luck and I accepted. He sat down and wrote out a paper, and I signed it. I've kept my contract ever since, and it hasn't always been pleasant, either ; and he no more suspects me now than he does himself. But you'd better believe I've never given up the idea of getting even with him, and the time's not far off now when I'll do it. From what I've found out, and from what you've told me, I know his big scheme pretty near as well as he does, and when he's all ready to touch it off, I'll make my terms with the other side and give away the whole thing. And when he comes raging round to me to choke the life out of me, I'll say, 'Hold on a minute, Mr. Drayton, if you please ! How about your daughter'— Holloa ! what now ?"

During the recital of this history of his wrongs Tom had worked himself into such an unwonted passion that he had forgotten to whom he was speaking, if, indeed, he remembered that he had any auditor. He was uttering all his stored-up fury and malice of years, and the stream of his wrath had finally swept him off his feet ; and he was recalled to himself only by hearing a panting cry from Lizzie, who had pushed the veil off her face, and was quite

white, and swayed in her seat. "There! there!" he said, somewhat alarmed. "You mustn't mind me. I don't often get mad, but when I do I must talk. I don't mean more than half of it."

Lizzie recovered herself in a few moments, enough to say in a faint and husky tone; "I understand now why you made love to me; it was to use me for your revenge on father, — by threatening him with putting his daughter to shame. And this is what I have given everything for! Seems to me I had better die. I only loved you, Tom, and I thought we should be so happy! Love seemed to make everything right."

"Upon my word and honor, Betsy, I hadn't an idea of this when I first met you and got smashed on you. But one thing leads to another, until we find ourselves where we never expected to be. I didn't sit down and hatch out a plot; it hatched itself; and all I do is to take what I find ready to my hand. We can't help it. It's human nature and fate that are at the bottom of everything in this world. But don't you go borrowing trouble, little Betsy. We shall be all right yet, and as happy as anybody. You wouldn't like me always to live under another man's thumb, would you? Oh, he and I won't have any trouble, once we understand

each other ! I'm a good fellow when you take me right, — aint I ? ”

“ I don't know what you are, or what I am, or what anything is,” returned Lizzie, her pretty mouth drooping despondently. “ But it seems to me that my father's plans must be worth more to the world than I am. I should be better out of the way.”

“ Oh, I say, Betsy, brace up and be cheerful ! Hang it all ! I give you my word, I couldn't get on without you, — I couldn't, honor bright ! ”

Lizzie gave him a peculiar glance, but said nothing ; and they rode on up the Riverside Park road.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SENTIMENT OF AMBITION.

THE success of the new water-works, fortified by skilful management, and by popular approbation, would probably have been satisfactory to its promoters in any case ; but fortune, with what seemed gratuitous graciousness, stepped in at the last moment, and made assurance doubly sure by bringing an unforeseen catastrophe upon the opposite party. During the severe frosts of the winter the dam, which they had erected at a vast expense to the tax-payers, developed a large fissure ; and, a thaw immediately succeeding, the great reservoir of water broke loose, inundated the country, and, in a few hours, did more damage than could have been made good in twice as many years. The whole business of supplying the city with water fell upon the new company. Their stock could only be purchased at fabulous prices ; and a local poet said of them, in a column of a daily newspaper, that they had tapped the river Pactolus, which runs over golden sands. The conceit happened to tickle the

popular fancy, and the company was known as "The Pactolus" ever after.

"Do you remember," said Warren to Drayton, one day, "having said, in a newspaper interview, that you would not commit yourself as to the respectability of the promoters of the water scheme?"

"I do," Drayton replied, smilingly, caressing his beard.

"Well, w-what did you say it for?"

"Partly, of course, in order to divert the suspicion that I might be in any way connected with them; but principally because I knew them to be all (with two exceptions — yourself and me) scamps."

"I always understood that they were men of your own selection."

"So they were! and it was precisely because I knew them to be scamps that I selected them; and very thoroughly have they vindicated my opinion."

"I suppose you have some d-diabolical wisdom concealed there; but I don't see it."

"It is simply another instalment of the same wisdom with which we began — that in order to do great works you must have ready and obedient tools. My tools are ready because they are unscrupulous, and they are obedient because their

unscrupulousness is known to me. You saw how I handled Muhlbach, one of the most powerful men in New York. I have the same kind of hold over every man in our syndicate, — not to speak of others, — and I can handle them just as easily. A year ago, however, their subservience could be of little use to me, because their power and influence were inconsiderable. But to-day they are, every one of them, persons of exceptional wealth, and able to control large and important political interests. They are more mine than ever, and they are worth a thousand per cent. more. They are the hands and feet by which I shall carry out my projects.”

“That is all very clever,” said Warren, in a dissatisfied tone; “but I do wish the time would come when you can use good men to do good work.”

“There are no such men! I’m not speaking cynically; I’m stating a fact. Good men, except in cases too rare to mention, are not ambitious of such ends as must control diligent and persistent political workers. A man in public life, unless he have commanding genius, cannot afford to be good; there is no place nor occupation for him. Good men (who are not also fools) see this, and content themselves with writing good books, bringing up good families, conducting good charities, or preach-

ing good or bad sermons. They are not to be had for far-reaching purposes like mine. I don't pretend to say why it is so ; but, as I didn't make the world, I am satisfied to take the world as it is. Now, the end and aim in life of these admirable friends of ours is to make money and wield an influence. For these objects they will barter as much honor and honesty as the devil himself could ask of them. There has been no need of my luring them on to rascality ; I have simply sat by and watched them acting out their inalienable natures. They have made more money than they know what to do with in the ordinary course of business ; but, notwithstanding, they have taken pains to steal as much again, for no earthly reason, that I can see, but the pure love of stealing. All right. Rather than have me expose them they will do anything that I command. Luckily for them, I shall not command murder, forgery, or perjury ; but I shall build up, by means of them and such as them, the greatest political power known to history" —

"Holloa ! Isn't that r-rather a large order?"

— "Of which you, my dear Warren, will be the heir," added Drayton, with a friendly nod.

"You must think I'm ambitious."

"If I know anything, I know that you have the

best and highest form of ambition. Your ambition and mine are alike, — though you have given the matter less thought than I have. It is an ambition, not for the show of things, but for the reality. Indeed, I carry it to an extreme which I don't expect or wish you to follow. Though I intend to hold the destinies of this nation — and thereby of the world — in my hands, my name will never be heard in history. I shall still appear as the quiet man, living privately upon his income, and indifferent to political concerns and vicissitudes. Whatever I do will seem to be done by others ; others will receive the praise, the respect, the love, and the fear, that belong to me. I shall not envy them. The only applause that I covet is my own ; and my success would have no greater value in my eyes if all mankind recognized it. And yet, I'll be frank with you, Warren, now as always, — this stoicism is not a mere whim of mine ; it has its practical and necessary side. The only unassailable power is the unknown and unseen power, — that which remains unmoved behind all outward changes ; which now expresses itself in a democratic form, now in a republican, and now in neither one nor the other, as occasion may demand. The characteristic of the mass of people is fickleness, which justifies itself by

masking its inconstancies behind a clamor for reform, which, being interpreted, means something new. As a matter of fact the differences of party are but a difference of hat and coat; the human nature beneath is unaffected by whatever costume. A man who sticks to party is a man who sticks to folly; but, since most men are fools, a wise man must withdraw himself from visible connection with politics altogether."

"Weren't Julius Cæsar and Napoleon great enough?—and their names were known."

"They were soldiers, and they lived in times when the people had comparatively no power. In this school and newspaper and ballot age those who wish to act truly great parts must wear a veil. Such a man must be absolutely free,—above the control of both society and individuals. It must be as impossible to depose or assassinate him as to imprison the wind or stab the sunlight; otherwise, he must temporize and compromise, and be some one's else man instead of his own."

"Well, that may suit you, but it wouldn't do for me," said Warren, giving his head a shake. "I want the collision and the rivalry,—a man among men, and the best man to win; half the fun for me would be in the effort and the danger. I don't care

to sit like an invisible Buddha, and rule the world by making it believe that its will is my own."

"No doubt — no doubt, Warren," said the other, looking at him intently; "your genius is for action, as mine is for organization. We won't flatter each other; you cannot do what I can; I can't do what you could; well, all the more can we be of use each to the other. Your career will be the complement of mine; and most men, as well as yourself, would prefer yours to mine. Your power will be just as absolute, — while it lasts; but it will last only so long as your personal luck and ascendancy continue. You have the faculty (which I lack) of attaching men to yourself; you can be genial and magnetic, while I am abstract and cold. You must be the great leader; I will be the great director. I could not succeed without you, because my plans need not only base tools, who can be bought with money or place, and commanded by fear and self-interest, but, also a mind that stands on equal terms with mine, — a man willing and able to occupy the lofty places that I shall provide for him. Otherwise I should be like a mechanic who has devised an ingenious machine, but has no motive-power to set it going. And you, on the other hand, could not succeed without me; for you must not vitiate the ardor of

action with the dryness of thought. You must rely on me for my share of the business, in order to be able to rely on yourself for yours. Be you the lever, and I the *pou sto*, and we'll move the world."

"After all, then, I should be only an instrument."

"What more am I, or any man? I believe in a Supreme Being, Warren, though I'm not glib at talking about him. When He has a purpose to carry out He makes some man the instrument of it. Because you and I cannot change places, shall we do nothing?"

Warren remained silent for a while, biting his lips and looking down. "After all," he said at length, "we have only been talking generalities so far, and I am in the dark. What is really your plan? Can you p-put it in the concrete?"

"Yes; but you must let me do that in my own way and time; I shan't keep you long waiting. Indeed, I will say here, that I shall never ask you to do anything that we have not previously discussed and agreed upon. Nothing will be attempted without your approval; for I know very well that what you don't do with your whole heart would better be left undone. Do you find the prospect, so far, uninviting?"

"It sounds better than anything I ever imagined ; but it doesn't sound real."

"Neither did the plans of Alexander sound real to his captains. More great destinies are missed through mistrust than through incapacity."

"I can understand how you might succeed, for you have money and connections, and you've been working with this end in view for years. But your proposition as regards me looks too like a m-miracle. I am poor and unknown ; what sort of a figure should I cut at the head of a nation ?"

"As to your poverty, that is a valuable quality which I hope you will keep," said Drayton, smiling. "I need money ; you don't. When you took your pay for your work on the water-works in money instead of stock you struck the key-note of your whole financial future. All the money you will ever have, or ought to have, will be money fairly earned by fair work. You have an instinct against usury in all its phases ; no dollar of yours will make itself into ten unless you sweat for it."

"Hold on ! you're going too fast. I didn't dabble in our stock, because I prefer to take out my excitement in other ways than gambling ; but as to my not wanting money, it's just what I do want. Money is the power of entering into the life around us."

"It is one of the means of entrance; but it is the least dignified and necessary of all. What you say proves my point; you wanted money only because you believed it to be essential to put you on certain terms with the world. Well, that is your mistake, and you will soon acknowledge it. Depend upon it, my diagnosis is right. Keep clear of money, Warren, as you would of the plague; it can do you no good, and might irretrievably injure your career. You can't doubt my sincerity, at all events. I care more for you than for any other man in the world, and by a scratch of this pen I might make you a millionaire ten times over; but I shall never do it! It is your fate to be the foremost figure in America, and never to own a bank-account."

"Well, that wouldn't be an unfair exchange," said Warren, laughing. "For my part, though, I never noticed much of the Cincinnatus in my character. But this is all a romance of yours, Drayton. Where did you come by so much imagination? There is such a thing as the Constitution of the United States."

"I have heard of some such document. Did you ever read it?"

"I could repeat it by heart when I was in college."

"Government of, by, and for the people, isn't it?"

No such transparent fraud was ever before put into grandiloquent periods. Clear your mind of cant, young man ! This government is the systematized robbery of the many by the few. No one is responsible, and no one cares. A policeman is a man who protects the criminal classes and shares their plunder. An alderman is a person by whose means wealthy corporations rob the city treasury. A State governor is an individual who organizes the depredations of his subordinates. A representative" —

"But, at all events, democracy is the last word of politics. Beyond it is chaos, and you can't go b-back to Europe."

"The brain rules the man. The husband rules the family. God rules the universe. But where is your prototype for a democracy? Where is your evidence that the many are wiser than the one? What is the value of that freedom which enables one, every four years or less, to vote for substituting one rogue's gallery for another? What virtue is in the tolerance which prostitutes this country to the occasions of all the world's assassins, adulterers, and atheists? What sort of prosperity is that which begets extravagance faster than it makes money? What is everybody's business is nobody's business

is a good old proverb, and the Constitution of the United States is its prophet !”

“There’s some truth in all that, no doubt. But to see an abuse is not to invent a remedy ; and, as for my share in the matter, though you have reconciled my poverty, you haven’t found a cure for my being unknown, which is poverty of a worse kind.”

“Who knew Gambetta six weeks before he became Dictator of France ? There is a cure for being unknown, — a certain and a swift one. Can you guess it ?”

“I’d rather you’d t-tell me.”

“It’s an emergency !” said Drayton, striking his flat hand on the table, and then rising from his chair. “The man who fills the breach of a national emergency will never afterwards have to complain of obscurity. And that is what you must do.”

“But what if an emergency doesn’t turn up ?”

“Then it must be created,” was Drayton’s reply ; “and that is what I will do, when the right time comes.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PAMPHLET.

A PRESIDENTIAL election was looming ahead, and both parties were gathering all their forces together for a decisive struggle. The present incumbents had the advantages of machinery and situation on their side; their opponents were supported by the popular love of change, and by the revelation of abuses that had infested the existing administration. Nations are like a man, who sometimes wants to read a Bible, and sometimes a jest-book, and can give no reason for either preference. Both wants are natural, and neither can finally exclude the other. The difference between the two political parties in the United States was, of course, much less than that between a jest-book and the Bible; but their similarity was due rather to their common disregard of statesmanship than to their devotion to opposing theories of that science. A political party, like an algebraic formula, is a device for dispensing with thought; though, unlike the latter, it is the product of emotion instead of reason.

In the midst of the preparations an incident happened which might almost be said to have monopolized, for a time, the public attention. It owed this effect, however, not so much to its essential or abstract importance as to its novelty and timeliness. It was nothing more than a pamphlet of a hundred pages, price five cents a copy, containing an imaginary account of the complications and changes following upon such events as a quarrel with Europe; a treasonable plot in Washington; an appalling pestilence; a startling revelation of the inward rottenness and impotence of all the means and appliances of the national government; the consequent imminent peril of our existence as a nation; and, finally, of the emergence, in the nick of time, of a man whose genius and energy were equal to the occasion. This man was young, like the country, strong and courageous, despising the shackles of tradition, endowed with the common-sense and tenacity which are the birthright of Englishmen, and with the imaginative intuition which the Englishman lacks. Drawn by the force of circumstances from the ranks of the people into a position where the eyes of the world were upon him, and the fate of the nation was in his hands, he dealt with his responsibilities boldly and sagaciously, and retained unaltered

the simplicity and homeliness of his native character and associations. The American people, when deeply stirred, are never wanting in enthusiasm and gratitude; and their confidence in this unlooked-for and semi-miraculous champion of theirs was as ardent as it was boundless. But, on the threshold of his most momentous undertaking the pamphlet came to an end, and the result of the crisis was left to the judgment and imagination of the reader.

It was, no doubt, owing largely to this forbearance on the writer's part that his production met with a success so extraordinary. Half a million copies were sold within a month of publication. The newspapers in all parts of the country reviewed it, discussed it in leading articles, and gave long extracts from it. Its mission was, not to dogmatize, but to suggest. But some suggestions are almost equivalent to a revolution. The conditions of the problem or predicament were so clearly stated, and the treatment of the theme bore evidence of such mastery of facts, and of both the public and private details of political affairs, that each reader thought he could detect the latent drift of the argument; and the circumstance that one individual's view did not coincide with his neighbor's only served to stimulate thought and argument. Several well-known public men were men-

tioned in the course of the narrative ; but the action was carried on by personages who had an existence only in the author's fancy, or who were, at any rate, unknown as yet to the world. In spite of the straightforwardness of the style and movement of the little book it was constructed with singular art, evincing a deep knowledge of human nature, — the human nature of its readers as well as of its characters. A shrewd critic said of it that it was a more dangerous, because a more insidious, attack upon the integrity of the Union than the act of secession itself. It did not attack or defend the theory of State rights ; but it insinuated the notion that the democratic form of government is the most stifling, because the most plausible, despotism that the world has yet seen. And, although it stopped short of specifying a remedy for the evils it portrayed, the logic of the circumstances seemed to indicate a dictatorship as the most promising solution of our dangers and perplexities.

When a presidential election is in prospect nothing is neglected by either party which appears capable of being adapted or twisted to its cause ; and the pamphlet was promptly seized upon by both sides as being a more or less open advocate of their several views. But when they found themselves quoting

the same passages with directly opposite interpretations the absurdity of the situation in which they had placed themselves became apparent; and they were united, for once, in condemning the *brochure* as a vicious and unprincipled publication. When, however, both the pot and the kettle agree in calling something else black, unprejudiced observers are prone to ask themselves whether there must not be some rare virtue in what is so suspiciously condemned. The circulation of the pamphlet received a new impetus; and it was now read by a graver and more thoughtful class, who were not accustomed to mix themselves up with the ordinary political intrigues. They found in it a deliberately planned and carefully executed arraignment of the results of popular government; the tone not bitter nor exaggerated, the succession of incidents unforced and logical, and the culmination inevitable. It was evidently conceived and executed by no ordinary mind. Who was the author? He was not named on the title-page, and the ingenuity of a million readers failed to solve the question of his identity. Some thought he was some ambitious spirit making a covert attempt to undermine the edifice erected by our forefathers. Others believed the pamphlet to be the work of a critical and dispassionate philoso-

pher, who saw the dangers to which we were liable, and would fain warn us of them in time. Others, again, saw in it the pronunciamiento of a secret organization, laying the foundations of a scheme to seize the reins of power. But no one could fix upon any known individual as likely to be the writer. The arguments were manifestly addressed to the higher order of citizens; to those whose neglect of the more important duties of citizenship had hitherto been a standing reproach to America. It was over the heads of the mass of eager and ignorant persons; it aroused their curiosity, but they were unable to fathom its true import. In spite, therefore, of the radical and daring changes that it suggested it flattered and conciliated the men whose influence must, in the long run, prevail over those more superficially active, — unless the commonwealth were frankly to be abandoned to the devil. It gave a certain bias to their meditations and forecasts; and led them to look forward with interest to what might be the next card played by one who seemed to hold so strong and unique a hand.

"Seems to me it must have been written by a very good person," said the ever amiable Susan Wayne, in the course of a conversation about it with Nell Anthony. "The language is so cultivated

and pleasant, and the writer seemed to be so desirous to state the exact truth. If my dear husband were alive, I'm sure he would have written in just that way."

"I don't think he would have written just such things," replied Nell, who was probably less sensitive to literary style than to ideas.

"It might be Uncle Joseph," said Susan; "only I never heard of his writing anything."

Nell shook her head with an expression of something like contempt. Uncle Joseph was the first human being she had ever completely disliked; and to her mind it was impossible he should have any redeeming feature, even of an intellectual kind.

"I don't believe you're as fond of Uncle Joseph as I am; I can't imagine why!" said Susan, pensively. "But who do you think it is, dear?"

"I don't know; but, whoever he is, I shouldn't trust him."

"Dear me! How strange! Now that's just what I *should* have done."

"I hope no one I love will ever have anything to do with the man that wrote that book. He knows a great deal; but I don't believe he really cares for his country. And it doesn't follow, because we are governed by bad men, that the way of governing is

bad. Besides, America is not a country, like the others ; it is the best part of all countries, — the noblest and freest thoughts of all the men in the world. And I would rather be governed as we are now, than by any one man, even if he were the best and wisest that ever lived.”

“ Well, dear, I never could understand much about these things, and you are always right about everything ; but still I don’t see why a great many bad men should rule us better than one good man.”

“ It isn’t that,” said Nell, taking up her sewing and resuming her work upon it ; “ but a ruler is a person who tries to make those he rules happy and prosperous ; and so the purest and most heaven-like kind of government must be that where the people rule ; where they all try to secure happiness and prosperity for one another. But if we left it all to one man we should have nothing to attend to but our own selfish interests, and we should think of one another only as rivals and obstacles. We might become more powerful and wealthy, but we should be less manly ; and the world would not look upon us any longer as the place where the loftiest hopes of mankind were to be realized.”

Susan accepted this view of the matter all the more submissively because she did not in the least

comprehend it. Nell herself smiled a little at her own eloquence. She was not accustomed to think in such phrases. But there are people who, as it were, provoke us into uttering ideas, and using figures of speech, which we should probably not have hit upon in solitude; and the provocation is due not to their sympathetic understanding of our sayings, but to the fact that they sympathize without understanding. And Susan was precisely one of these comfortable people.

Mr. Terence O’Ryan, who had lately moved into a handsome suite of rooms at the Hoffman House, was a less severe critic of the book than Nell. “Afther all,” he remarked to Warren, twisting his dark mustache, and then inserting his hands slowly into the pockets of his immaculate trousers, “it don’t so much matter if we dhrive a single stepper, or six-in-hand, so as we get ahead, and cover the ground. ’Tis the chaps with brains should have the front place, and, sure, there’s not so many of ’em! The public revenue is dispersed and wasted amongst a lot of blockheads and blackguards, when ’twould be much better lining the pockets of a few good fellers that would know how to use it. Show me one good man, with a head on his shoulders and a grip on his business, and, faith! ’tis Terence

O'Ryan would follow him through thick and thin ! And, by the same token, the chap that wrote that book won't be a bad sort the day he dhrops the pin, and makes a grab for the ballot-box ! ”

“ Is the ballot-box mightier than the pen ? ” Warren asked.

“ Sure that depends on whether you're casting the votes or counting 'em,” replied Terence, with a twinkle of the eye ; “ and what's voting amount to any way ? Isn't there a hundred men to-day will vote as I tell 'em, and not the half of an idea among the whole blessed pack of 'em what it's all about ? And won't I and a hundred others vote as the boss bids us if it 'twas for the devil himself — God bless him ! Very well, then, Mr. Bell, in the name of common-sense and economy, why not cut off the zeros and keep the units ? Where's the use of a lot of idle, shiftless ignoramuses, that calls themselves politicians, and all the politics they know is to get tight on other men's whiskey, and carry torches in a parade ? Sure 'twould be better both for them and the country if they was all at work earning their bread at some honest calling, contributing to the honor and prosperity of the land, and laving government to them as was born to govern. Faith, 'tis out of patience with 'em I am, intirely,” said Mr.

O’Ryan, turning to pour out a thimbleful of Old Bourbon, and nodding at Warren as he tossed it down his throat.

“The amount of it is that we shall be ruled by cir-cumstances, like the rest of the world,” Warren observed.

“With all my heart, so the circumstances are of my own conthiving,” rejoined Terence, with a laugh and a wink; and then Warren left him.

He crossed Broadway, and turned up Fifth avenue. In a moment a step came up behind him, and Drayton appeared at his side. They greeted each other with a friendly brevity, and walked on together.

“O’Ryan was just speaking to me about that new pamphlet,” Warren said. “It’s odd how many men here seem not averse to a change of government.”

“For my part,” returned Drayton, “I should say we change our government only too often.”

“I mean, change it altogether, — abolish the Republic.”

“Do you think that would be possible?”

“Well, yes. There are a great many people who would like a monarchy, or even a despotism, just for the pleasure of being courtiers. Then there are others, like O’Ryan, who would favor it because

they think it would make them richer. And no doubt there are some who would accept it from patriotic and philosophic motives."

"Are you among any of those classes?"

"I don't think I should care to call any man my master."

"Suppose you were to meet a man who was your master, — whether physically, mentally or spiritually, — as, according to Shakespeare, Augustus was the master of Anthony. Without any derogation of your qualities, my dear boy, such a thing is conceivable. In that case would you refuse to acknowledge his mastership?"

"Well, yes, I guess I would, — in the sense we are talking of."

"Would not that be simply refusing to admit what was, nevertheless, a fact, — a mere question of words, when the thing itself was conceded?"

"N-not as I see it. A man may be a better man than I, — plenty of them, — and yet have no right to order me round. A man is accountable to the law, which is the human version of the will of God; and, in comparison with that, the difference between the greatest man and the least is too small to be worth consideration. A man who pretends to be greater than the law" —

"Yes ; but we don't want to go into abstractions," interrupted Drayton, good-humoredly. "We are a practical nation. Our form of government is not an arbitrary creation of Jefferson and Washington ; it grew up gradually and unconsciously from the primitive procedure of our isolated frontier towns and villages. Congress is nothing but the meeting of the village selectmen magnified a few hundred diameters. We have drifted into a republic ; we didn't create it of malice aforethought. The constitution formulates and legalizes what was found ready to hand ; a critic might say it made the best of a bad bargain. Our forefathers were in a very independent mood just then ; they had been fighting the British, and the more their government could be made to seem different from the British the better they would be pleased. It was a leap in the dark, taken in anything but a dispassionate moment. And, seriously, Warren, I'm inclined to think it was a leap in the wrong direction. Human nature is the same here that it is in England, and even in Russia ; and the republican form of government doesn't suit human nature. In every great body of men there will be so many snobs, so many money-makers, so many idlers, so many aristocrats, so many *canaille*, so many rulers

and patriots. Now, our government, theoretically, only recognizes the existence of the last two ; but, as a matter of fact, the other classes are here, and, as there is no accommodation prepared for them, they make the best they can for themselves. The result is confusion, perplexity, rascality, and obstructions of all kinds. In England, on the other hand, there is, broadly speaking, a place for everybody, and everybody is in his place, and the government inevitably falls into the hands of the persons best qualified to administer, who, again, could only have come into existence under the kind of government which they administer."

"Then do you go in for a limited monarchy in America?"

"No ; for a limited monarchy cannot be made to order. It is natural to England, for it is the outgrowth of their peculiar condition during a thousand years ; but it would be artificial and absurd for us."

"Well w-what's your alternative?"

"Perhaps not very far from that suggested by the author of the pamphlet."

"And what is that?"

"You should be able to answer that question as well as I."

"The truth is," Warren confessed, "I never read the thing."

Drayton glanced at him in some surprise. "Isn't that rather eccentric?"

"I didn't mean it that way. I don't think I thought much about it. Besides, logic and reasoning are not of much use to me in such matters. It's accident and p-prejudice, I guess, that do the business."

Drayton gave a quiet laugh. "Upon the whole," he said, "I am glad you didn't read it. It wasn't written for you; it was written for everybody else. You need another sort of medicine, if you need any."

"How do you know who it was or was not written for?" Warren inquired.

"For one thing because I know who wrote it."

"Who was it?"

"I wrote it myself," answered Drayton, laughing again. "But here we are at my house. Come in; I want to have a chat with you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LEAP IN THE DARK.

THEY went into the library, and Drayton asked the servant whether Miss Drayton were at home. The man replied that she had gone out about half an hour before.

"I congratulate you on your success in authorship," said Warren. "Is this your first work?"

"The first and the last," answered Drayton. His manner was abstracted, and he sat for some time in silence, with his arms folded and his eyes turned downwards. At last he looked up and said, "Warren, most men of your age have some affair of the heart on hand. I was married at twenty-five. Have you ever contemplated such a step?"

"Well, I don't expect to be married," said Warren, rubbing his forehead with his hand.

"You have had some early love-scrapes, like the rest of us?" Drayton continued, pleasantly.

"I don't know. I don't understand women. I don't think I could trust a woman. I get on better with men. You can generally tell what a man will do,

but women beat all calculations. They don't do what you expect, and they do what you don't expect. Some men, I suppose, have a genius for women; but I'm not one of them. And not to understand a woman seems to have a bad effect on her. It seems to dem-demoralize her."

"We mustn't expect too much of them, my dear boy. They are emotional; they communicate a color and a sparkle to the ordinary facts of life, and we are sometimes liable to overrate the world under their influence. But, after all deductions, the truth remains that women add essentially to the happiness, the order, and the prosperity of existence; only we must remember to apply to them the doctrine of the conservation of energy. If you begin with a blaze of romantic passion you will end with a frigid commonplaceness. The best plan is to strike a reasonable average at first, and then your relations will improve instead of deteriorating; for you will form habits of affection and association, and these in themselves are agreeable. Be the friend of your wife; be kind, be firm, be charitable; and, unless your choice has been particularly unfortunate, your life with her will be full of very solid and useful satisfactions. Don't expect to find the world in her; but look upon her as your constant alternative

from the world. The world will give you all that she cannot ; but the rewards of the world would be less grateful without her."

"That is sensible enough ; but I could never woo a woman on those terms. I must at least believe I'm in love with her, if I want to make her love me."

"Women can — and, generally speaking, they ought to — be guided towards marriage by other influences than those of the lover. The European customs have much good sense in them, though they are carried to an extreme. Warren, I have a great desire to see you married."

"I should be happy to oblige you ; but" —

"I desire," Drayton continued, leaning forward and speaking with great earnestness and feeling, "to live to see your children — your daughters and your sons — growing up around you ; and to know that the plans, which I am forming for your future have a chance of being carried on by your posterity. And one thing more, Warren : I have no other son but you ; all my acts and hopes have respect to you ; why should you not, when you take a wife, take her whose union to you would unite you also with me ? Be my son, indeed ; be the husband of my daughter !"

"My dear Drayton!" exclaimed Warren, too much astonished to remember his manners, "you don't know w-what you are saying! Your daughter would no more think of marrying me than she would a bronze statue in the park! I haven't talked with her a score of times in my life. I should only make her miserable, and" —

"You don't know her — you have said enough to prove that," interrupted Drayton, with a confident smile. "This is the first time I've spoken to you on the subject; but I have conversed more than once with her. And, without violating her confidence, I may tell you she does not think you would make her miserable."

Warren stared at his interlocutor, but was unable to say anything.

"I have entrusted her," the other went on, "with much of the general scope of the design I have been forming concerning your future connection with the affairs of this country. She understands what your career is to be, and she has in her the qualities which would enable her to promote and to appreciate this. In her feminine way she has an ambition which would harmonize with yours, and support it. Personally she is fitted to adorn any station in life to which she might be called. Your marriage

would draw us all closer together ; and, since you have no other attachment, I am convinced you would find all you can wish in her."

"Have you already proposed me to her — do you mean that?"

"Oh, certainly not ! I could not know, until I had it from your own lips, that you were not otherwise interested. But, of course, I can read Lizzie's mind and heart like an open book, and I know that it needs only a word from you to turn her wholly in your direction. She isn't dying of love for you, Warren : her nature is more intelligent than passionate ; but she is sympathetic and affectionate, and I have noticed that she is already becoming weary of the superficial social pleasures that have engaged her during the last two or three years. She wants some deeper and more tender interest in life. You seem to lack something, too. Can you not find it in each other?"

Warren got up from his chair and walked about the room. It was true that he lacked something,— he had felt that for a long time ; but as to finding it in Lizzie— His thoughts had been busy with quite a different figure. And yet, to what end should he meditate upon that other? He knew her no more than he knew Lizzie — perhaps not so much. He

had believed that she would accept him, and she had refused him : that was the first mistake. She had come to New York without informing him of it, and had tried to conceal herself from him when, by accident, they had met ; he had never detected anything in her to prepare him for that. Again, the meeting had occurred in the house of a man whose reputation Warren knew to be scandalous. What had been her errand there? The girl whom Warren had known and loved in his boyhood had revealed no trait that would answer that question. No ; she had receded beyond the grasp of his faith and knowledge ; she was not what he had believed her to be, and she avoided him for sufficient cause. Why, then, did he follow her with unavailing thoughts? Did he love her, after all? He would not admit it. Why should he love her more than on that day when he had asked her to marry him? And since she was lost to him he must turn elsewhere for compensation. He must take his ambition to wife ; and, if Drayton wished it, and Lizzie were willing, why not take her, too? She was pretty, graceful, and pliable ; not likely to engross him too deeply, and capable enough, no doubt, of filling and ornamenting the vacant interstices of existence. From the worldly point of view the

match was splendid. From any point of view it was reasonable and expedient. And yet he had never felt less happy than at this moment.

He returned to his chair and sat down.

"I need scarcely say," Drayton remarked, "that I don't expect you to make up your mind on so grave a matter immediately. Think it over for a day or two" —

"There's no necessity for that; my only doubt would be whether I ought to accept so fine a gift. But that's your lookout, Drayton. If she'll have me I'll have her, and the s-sooner the better!"

Drayton reached forward and took Warren's hand in his.

"This is a day to which we shall both look back with satisfaction, as long as we live," he said. "It realizes the best part of my hopes; the rest is struggle and uncertainty. But, now that we are bound together by such a tie, we ought to be a match for anything."

"You may count on me for all I'm worth," returned Warren, with a reckless feeling. He longed to be in activity, — to be absorbed heart and soul in something — no matter what. The less he looked inward, henceforth, the better for him; he must find all his interest and comfort in what lay without.

But it is remarkable how insignificant the outward world seems to a man when the inner one is closed to him.

"I have never doubted you," Drayton said; "and you may count on me to show you work worth your doing. You shall live at the centre of things, and make the history that other men will spend the next century in writing. Let me see: I think there will be time to open the matter, at least, before Lizzie comes in; after that there will be affairs of another kind to listen to. My first step—to plunge at once *in medias res*—will be to annex Mexico." Here Drayton made a pause, as if to afford Warren an opportunity for an exclamation; but the latter only said, "All right. I am willing to annex Canada and Japan into the bargain, if you will furnish the commissariat and plans of campaign."

"Mexico will be particularly useful to us, outside of her intrinsic value," Drayton explained; "for the annexation will not be accomplished without difficulties, and it will go hard if some of those difficulties don't bring us into trouble with the English possessions in the West Indies."

"I begin to see. You want a row."

"I want the threat of one. Americans are as cool and cautious as Scotchmen in indifferent

matters ; but touch them in a sensitive spot, and they fire up like Spaniards. We might dilly-dally over Mexico for a hundred years, if we were left to ourselves ; but if England or any other nation pretends to meddle we would swoop like a hawk. We are the most peaceable people in the world to-day, but the martial spirit is beneath it all, just the same ; and, after giving all due weight to the horrors of war, I am inclined to think the imminent prospect of war, if not war itself, would do us an immense deal of good. The programme which I have laid down includes a vast stimulus to our army and navy, and a continual possibility, for several years to come, of their being brought to the actual test. The temper of the nation must be changed ; there must be a controlling sympathy in some common aim ; less cynical and jesting tolerance ; more sternness and preoccupation. Those are the conditions under which great leaders rise up, and the people put their whole faith in them. The hostility of Europe can do us very little harm, for we are a world in ourselves ; and, besides, Europe is likely to have her hands full of her own troubles for a long while to come. But in all moral and patriotic respects, such hostility would directly benefit us."

"I thoroughly agree with you," said Warren, rais-

ing himself in his chair, and nodding emphatically. "But there is something to be done before beginning upon Mexico. You must elect your own man for President, and see that he does what you tell him."

"I see that you will need very little instruction," said Drayton, a little surprised at the other's strenuous and uncompromising tone. "Yes, the President must be our property, and I have been taking measures for the last year and more to secure that result."

"The certain way would be to own both the candidates, — Democratic and Republican."

"Right again! Upon my word, Warren, you are more a politician than I had supposed. But that plan is beset by various technical difficulties. There is a third device, which may turn out the best of all; and that is, to create a third party, with a new platform, and elect an independent President on that. That would insure the confidence of a better if not a larger class of voters than any other. And, as things look now, the approaching campaign would be a capital opportunity to attempt such a *coup*. Reform will be the great rallying-cry."

"Well, we'll suppose our man elected one way or another. What is to be my position?"

"What would you like?"

"An obscure one to begin with. I am too young to come to the front at once. But you must create an emergency, as you call it, and I must be called on to meet it. That must lead to my being advanced. To make a long story short, Drayton, I shall look to you for opportunities, and plenty of them; and you may depend on me for the rest. Within a year I shall be where I want to be, and the people will have got used to me. Then the worst will be over."

"You will find, when we come to go over the details together, that only your personal failure can stand in the way of your success. And I wouldn't protect you against that, if I could!"

"No. The day I am free of you will be the day you will realize what I can do for both of us."

"Of course," continued Drayton, "we shall need more than one administration to thoroughly establish our policy. The dictatorship must seem to be forced upon us by the popular desire,—not sought by ourselves. The form of electing a new President every four years must still be observed; but the power behind the President will remain always unchanged."

"Just as Cæsar retained the consuls and the Senate long after they had become mere figure-heads. But our people are cleverer than the *Populus Romanus*, and will see through"—

"I hear the bell: she has come," Drayton interposed, rising. "I shall leave you. Say a few words to her in the sense we have agreed upon" —

"I would rather you stayed," said Warren, quickly.

The stepping of small feet sounded along the hall, and Lizzie appeared at the door of the library. She was dressed in a silk velvet pelisse trimmed with fur, and wore a turban-like hat, which suited the soft, piquant loveliness of her face well. But her expression was dejected, and the sight of Warren did not brighten it. She murmured some apology for intruding, and was about to retire.

"Come in, — come in, dear," said Drayton, smilingly. "We were just now speaking about you."

"About me?" she repeated, with a slight blush. "I thought men always talked business."

"Well — and doesn't their most engrossing business often relate to women?" her father rejoined.

Warren had risen, and he now came forward, holding out his hand; and Lizzie allowed him to take hers, though with a shrinking and suspicious air.

"I wanted your father to be present while I said to you the most important thing I shall ever have to

say to any woman," he began in a very gentle tone, which vibrated a little. "I won't pretend to hope that you have anticipated it—I d-don't know how to recommend myself in conventional ways. I can only say that your father and I have the same hopes and interests; and if you could only think it possible to care for me, — to be my w-wife" —

Lizzie withdrew her hand, and stood facing him with dilated eyes and dry lips. And yet she had expected that this thing would some time occur, and she had often considered the manner in which she would deal with it. But the moment seemed especially inopportune; the conditions were not as she had pictured them in her mind; above all, she was embarrassed by the presence of her father, to whom she had, in truth, intimated more or less definitely that she would consider the proposal favorably. She had done this partly in order to escape his persuasions and partly in order to divert any possible impression on his part as to her real situation. But now the crisis was come, and her presence of mind was gone; the very gravity of the predicament increased her inability to evade it. When a woman is forced to speak without knowing what to say she nearly always says the last thing she wanted to.

"O Mr. Bell," she exclaimed in a stumbling

way, "I'm sure I didn't mean you should see I cared for you — I mean — father ought not to have told you that I thought of being your — anybody's wife. I was very happy at home — I had no idea that you really" — She stopped, for it was worse than useless to go on. Some perverse demon was making her seem to insinuate everything that she was most anxious to repudiate. Even her trembling and blushing were misleading, and she knew it. She stood there like a bashful maiden suffused with lovely shame at the revelation of her heart's secret.

Warren on the other hand, might have interpreted her aright, had love been in his eyes to sharpen them; but, as the whole matter was perfunctory on his part, he constrained himself to see in her behavior only what favored his purpose, though it opposed his desire. And, with his innate impatience of delays and uncertainties, he hurried on to commit himself beyond the possibility of withdrawal while the iron was hot.

"Try to forgive my clumsiness," he said, taking both her hands, which she now surrendered to him with a sigh that meant despair, but sounded like timid pleasure. "My life will show you what I feel for you better than my words can. This must seem very sudden to you; but, if we had known each

other all our lives, it would be the same at last. I will try to make you happy, Lizzie ; and if I succeed it will give me more happiness than I ought to hope for."

He waited a moment, looking down at her ; but as she did not lift her eyes or speak, he bent and kissed her lightly on the cheek. She started at the touch of his lips, and caught her breath ; for an instant she looked in his eyes in an appealing, terrified way ; then, stepping back from him, she turned and left the room, with her hands over her face.

"I was in the way, as I knew I should be, and the little girl was frightened," Drayton said, coming forward and laying a hand on Warren's shoulder. "But she managed to indicate her feelings very clearly — and very prettily, though I say it ; and I can congratulate you on having made her and me — and I hope yourself — very happy !"

"Yes ; that is settled," returned Warren, regarding the other with a preoccupied gaze. He shook his head, took a long breath and added, "Now I'm r-ready for anything."

CHAPTER XIX.

A SURPRISE.

SUSAN WAYNE had evidently, for some time past, had a secret on her mind ; in fact she had frequently admitted as much to Nell, at the same time entreating her not to ask what it was. Nell complied with this request with perhaps even more loyalty than Susan desired ; for a secret that nobody tries to find out is hardly a full-fledged secret at all.

That the secret related in some way to the projected Home, was, indeed, apparent enough. After the interview already described between the ladies and Uncle Joseph the idea of renting the Peter-and-Paul establishment had fallen through ; several other houses had been examined and rejected, on one ground or another, until, two or three months ago, Susan had suddenly become mysterious ; and, while deprecating any further search, had nevertheless declared that it would be "all right," and she dared say they would get just what they wanted if they waited a little. Nell, meanwhile, had sufficient occupation for her thoughts in the consideration of

various details of the scheme after it should have been started, as well as of other matters of private interest to herself; and she did not think it likely that Susan would get into any very serious scrape without betraying herself in time. When, therefore, her friend proposed one afternoon that they should take a drive, accompanying the suggestion with much enigmatical elephantine pantomime, Nell came to the conviction that the secret was on the eve of a happy delivery, and she set forth with a serene mind.

They drove through the park, and then turning to the right, entered the neighborhood of One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street. Here the houses were less compactly placed, and showed a greater variety and independence in style of architecture than in the lower portion of the city. There were gardens and open spaces, and trees — which, though now bare of leaves gave promise of grateful verdure in summer — lined the streets. There was a sense of air and elevation, topographical, if not social; though even in the latter respect the region was quite unexceptionable. At length they approached a large edifice, of almost colonial aspect, built of ancient brick, and standing back from the road in a garden of its own. Though ancient in comparison with its neighbors, it was

evidently in excellent repair; and it had a sumptuous, hospitable, home-like air with it, such as the modern architect seldom tries for, and still more seldom attains. Two large elms grew on either side of it, and their arching branches rose above the broad roof. The coachman turned his horses in at the carriage-gate, and reined them in at the door.

"What a pleasant place!" said Nell. "What is it?"

"Oh, it was recommended to me as likely to suit us for the Home, you know, and I thought I'd bring you up to look at it. It does look nice, doesn't it? Well, come in."

The wide door opened as they ascended the steps, and they entered a spacious and well-lighted hall, with an ample staircase mounting upwards in the distance. The house was even more extensive than it appeared from the outside. Several doors on each side of the hall opened into airy rooms, quietly but comfortably furnished, and as neat as wax. There were no signs of present occupation, and yet everything seemed ready for occupants. Each room had pictures on the walls, growing plants in pots in the windows, and books on a book-shelf. In the rear was a large kitchen and offices, fitted up completely with all necessary implements and utensils,

scoured till they shone again. The hall passed through the house, and opened at the further end into an enclosed garden, where there were half-a-dozen gnarled apple-trees, and straight paths between grass-plots bordered with currant-bushes.

"This is almost as good as Hickory!" exclaimed Nell, giving the warmest praise that her unforgetting heart would allow.

"I am so glad you like it, dear," returned Susan, with her broad smile. "I thought you would. But we haven't been upstairs yet; there are two flights." And she led the way, climbing upward with an expression of genial energy in her broad back that was agreeably in harmony with the character of the surroundings.

The upper part of the house was worthy of the handsome and substantial basement. There seemed to be no end to the bedrooms, and it was hard to say which was the brightest and prettiest. The family which had originally inhabited this dwelling must have been a large one, and much given to the exercise of hospitality. The third floor was a repetition of the second, on a somewhat reduced scale as regarded the height of the rooms; and the whole was surmounted by a cupola, from which there was a fine view of Har-

lem river and Highbridge, and the wooded heights of Morrisania.

"Are you sure we can have this place?" demanded Nell, turning upon her friend, when they had finished their promenade through the apartments. "Isn't it too dear, or something?"

"No," Susan replied, beaming anew; "I believe it's quite reasonable. And you can see for yourself how healthy and clean it is. And it's very accessible, you know, and yet not too much in the town."

"But how is it that there's no one here, and yet everything is in such good order?"

"Well, you see the people that owned it don't live in it, — there aren't enough of them to fill it, I suppose; so they wanted to dispose of it, and so they would naturally put it in order. I don't think we should need to make many alterations, do you?"

"None at all that I see. We wanted a home-like place, and this is like a real home. It only needs to have people in it to be perfect. Our poor people, though!" she added, walking to a window and gazing towards the city.

"How soon could we have possession of it?" she asked, turning again after a moment.

"Oh, we could have it immediately, I believe. We might begin to-morrow."

"Who is the agent — the business man?"

"I don't know that I can give his name," said Susan, with a rather ambiguous twinkle of her little eyes. "But we might have him call on us whenever we wish."

"I was thinking," Nell went on, "that, if it could be done, it might be better to buy this place outright. By and by this land will become more valuable, and other houses will be built, and then the rents will rise. And it would be comfortable to feel that there was no landlord to be responsible to. That is for you to decide, though."

"It was just exactly what I thought all along," exclaimed Susan, clapping her plump hands together. "It ought to belong to us; and it shall — shan't it?"

"It would come to a good deal, I'm afraid, — with all the furniture, too. Have you any idea what the selling price would be?"

"O Nell! my dearest, what difference does that make if we are satisfied with the place? If you say yes, then we'll consider it ours, and that's the end of it!"

"It is easy to say yes; I only wish I could do something that would give me more right to say it," returned Nell.

"Do something!" cried Susan, taking her in her arms and kissing her. "Why, you do everything! I only sit and look on! I don't feel as if I had any right to be here unless you let me! I can tell you one thing, — this house would never have been ours if it hadn't been for you; we shouldn't ever have known that there was such a place."

"How can that be? What do you mean? You knew of it before I did."

"Never mind! that is the real truth, and you will understand how directly. By the way, come downstairs again. There is one thing you haven't seen, and I hope you'll think it the best of all. And it will explain everything, too. Come!"

As they returned to the basement Nell was silent and perplexed; and a strange, unreasonable hope was trying to force itself into recognition in her heart. She told herself that it was absurd and impossible, and yet she could not dismiss it. Moreover, Susan's next words seemed almost to justify and confirm it.

"When you like a thing very much, as we like this house, for instance," Susan said, "and everything about it is just the way we wanted it to be, did you ever think, dear, whether there was anything that could make it pleasanter to possess it?"

"How do you mean?" asked Nell, quickly.

"Well, suppose there was a beautiful flower, that was as lovely as it could be in itself, so that it would seem impossible to improve it, don't you think you would value it more, and feel happier in having it, if it were given to you by some one whom you like very much, and respected and admired, and who gave it to you because he thought very highly of you?"

"But a rose is not a house," replied Nell, half laughing and half grave.

"A house is as good as a rose if the right person gives it in the right way," Susan answered, with rare epigrammatic point. "But now I shan't say a word more. Come into this room, and you will see for yourself."

Nell's heart, which had been growing unnaturally indolent of late, began to beat hard. Every young woman will, at some moment of her life, anticipate a miracle, especially if it be a happy one. And the miracle that was dazzling Nell's eyes just now, and bringing tears into them, was to the effect that Warren Bell was in some way concerned in this affair. How or why, she could not imagine; still less was it conceivable that he and Susan would have met and conspired in this way, without Nell's

ever suspecting it. If this was Susan's secret it was a secret indeed. But it was not to be believed, and the only reason Nell could have given for believing it was that it would be the greatest happiness (as she fancied) that God could vouchsafe to her.

But life supplies very few well-authenticated instances of this kind of dramatic felicity. When the door opened and Nell entered with her soul in her eyes, she saw a stout, elderly gentleman rise from a table and come forward to meet her, with an insinuating smile on his shrewd, massive face, and a deed of sale in his hand. The revulsion was so abrupt and so violent that it seemed to her as if a diabolical enchantment had suddenly transformed Warren Bell into the repulsive similitude of Uncle Joseph. But there was no enchantment about the matter. Uncle Joseph was there in solid flesh and blood, and primed with a graceful little speech, conveying to Nell, as sole and absolute owner, the title-deeds of the house and estate which she had just been so frankly admiring. He had no doubt that he was doing a very graceful and chivalric act, and one that could not fail to make a tender impression even on the chilly snow of her virgin heart.

CHAPTER XX.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

It was near dinner-time when the two ladies reached home. During the drive thither Nell spoke not a single word, and it was easy even for the unobservant Susan to see that she was very indignant about something. But, though Susan addressed many remarks and several direct questions to her, Nell made no more reply than if she had been stone deaf; and her poor friend gradually worked herself into an extreme state of nervous agitation. They went up to dress, still in silence; but while Susan was in the midst of her toilet, there was a knock at her door, and Nell came in, looking very cloudy and ominous.

"May I ask you some questions, Susan?" she said, in a monotonous voice.

"Oh, yes, dear — anything!" Susan exclaimed, almost tearfully. "I only wish you would."

"I couldn't say anything before; but I have thought that perhaps you didn't know all that was

to happen. Of course you knew that the house was a gift from — Judge Muhlbach?"

"But you know, Nell, it pleased him so to help us; and the house had belonged to a relative of his, who left it to him in his will, so it didn't cost him anything; and it was so exactly what he knew we wanted; and he sympathized so with us! I'm sure I thought you would be pleased, — I don't see why you shouldn't be; and I thought it would make you like him better; for it has seemed to me sometimes that you didn't appreciate him as much as he deserved, for he is the best man in the" —

"I believe you think so," Nell interrupted, sternly; and there was a little silence. "Did you know," she presently resumed, "what he was going to say to me in that room?"

"He was going to tell you how it all was, and to present you with the title-deeds, — what else was there to say?" Susan demanded plaintively.

"Then why did you go out of the room, and stay out so long, and leave him and me alone there together?" continued Nell, her voice sharpening a little, while her large eyes were fixed steadily upon the other's broad, appealing countenance.

"Why, Nell! you know it was only an accident at first," Susan exclaimed earnestly. "You know

the care-taker came and asked me to see the kitchen boiler, which we had forgotten to look at; and then she kept me quite a while talking about all sorts of things; and then, when I was going back, I thought may be you'd better have your talk with uncle alone, and that I'd only be in the way. But indeed, Nell, I never dreamed you wouldn't like it. You know he's old enough to be your father — or mine either; and he's the best man " —

"He is not my father, or even my uncle; and I don't believe there was so much accident as you think about the care-taker coming to ask you about the boiler. He had arranged it all beforehand; and it was not about the title-deeds that he wished to speak to me."

"Dear me! What could it have been, then?" cried Susan, an accent of irrepressible curiosity penetrating through her distress.

The solemnity of Nell's features relaxed somewhat. "I'm glad you don't know," she said. "I thought you must, and that you had agreed with him to give him the opportunity. He said that — well, he asked me to marry him."

"Nell! — My Uncle Joseph! — Marry him!" — These sentences came from Susan in a feeble treble,

for she was quite out of breath with astonishment.

"But — are you — did you — you didn't — ?"

"We are not going to be married," Nell said, with a slight nervous shudder. She sat for a few moments looking down at her hands, which were crossed in her lap.

"Uncle Joseph!" murmured Susan again, still groping in depths of wonder. "What did he do when you refused him?" she inquired, after a pause.

"He talked a great deal. He told me how rich he could make me. He seemed to think that a wife was something you can go to market and buy. At last he wanted to know whether I preferred any one to him; I told him, almost any one! Then he asked why I objected to him? At last he made me angry, and I told him why, and I told him just what I thought."

"Oh, dear! how awful it was! Won't you tell me, dear?"

"I said that, the first time I saw him he had called the man that I care for more than any one else a scamp. You remember, Susan; it was he we met coming out, that day we went to see your uncle. That was Warren Bell. He once asked me to be his wife, and I said no, — not because I didn't

love him, but because I did. I came here so as to be near him. I wanted to be glad when he was glad, and sorry when he was sorry, and warn him or protect him if he fell into any danger. But I thought that a country girl like me would only be a burden on him as a wife ; and, unless he recognized me on that day, he thinks I am still in Hickory. Thank Heaven I'm not, though !" she exclaimed, her emotion flashing out for a moment.

Susan clasped her hands before her ample breast. "Nell, how romantic ! And you never told me a word of it all this time !" Indeed, this fact seemed to Susan's mind the most remarkable feature of the affair. "But what did Uncle Joseph say ?" she added.

"A great many things ; and some that I thank him for. He told me what Warren Bell is doing — how he is being used by other men for something bad and dangerous. I had feared that, for I know how generous and impetuous he is ; and, from time to time since I have been here, I have learned things about him ; but I never should have learned so much that is important except from your uncle, who told it to me to make me believe that Warren is as bad as the men who are making use of him. I don't know how he found out what he told ; in no honest way, I'm sure."

"My head is all turned round!" murmured Susan.
"What shall you do?"

"I can say nothing about that. But I told your uncle that I would have nothing to do with his gift of the Home. He may give it to you, if he chooses, and marry you, if you'll have him, — you said he wasn't your real uncle, — but then it will be no concern of mine. I shall be very sorry, Susan, not to be with you as we had hoped, — and the house couldn't be better, — but I will accept nothing from him, nor be associated with him in any way."

At this announcement Susan burst into tears. She had been uncertain whether to laugh or cry for some time past, and would have probably ended by doing both had not the feeling that she was abandoned by her best friend determined her in favor of the latter. Nell was somewhat disturbed by this manifestation; she had been thinking much more of her resentment against Muhlbach than Susan's affection for her; and, her whole nature being in an exalted state, she vibrated much more sensitively than usual to the touch of emotion. But, just as the drops were trembling in her own eyes, Susan was visited by an inspiration which brought a smile sputtering — so to speak — to the surface of her tears.

"Why shouldn't I pay uncle whatever price the house is worth?" she demanded. "Then we should be under no obligations to him, and we could still be together. Will that satisfy you, dear? If you leave me, I declare I believe I should die!"

"I can't advise you about a thing like that," said Nell, hesitatingly. "You must not buy it for my sake, but only if you would prefer to buy it anyway. If you don't mind being obliged to him, you mustn't let"—

"But I do mind! and I'm infinitely obliged to you, dear, for showing me how wrong it was. I never know the right thing to do unless I'm told; and, as I always say, I depend on you to do it. I was so busy thinking how pleased you would be with the house that the other part of the business never entered my head. Oh, how glad I am that's settled!" and she kissed her friend vigorously. "I wish you'd tell me more about Mr. Bell," she continued. "Is he worthy of you? and what sort of danger is he in?"

The answer to these questions (though they were only partial ones) could not be rendered in a few minutes, and dinner was kept waiting an unconscionable while. But when at last the two friends went downstairs, their relations were more affec-

tionate and harmonious than they had ever been yet.

One forenoon, not long afterwards, Nell was on her way up Fifth avenue, when, on a street corner, she met Warren Bell face to face. On this occasion Nell did not pull down her veil. She had made up her mind to speak to Warren the next time she saw him. As their eyes met, a momentary tremor went through her, and then she became composed. Warren dropped his eye-glasses, recovered them, and held out his hand, into which she immediately put her own. She noticed that he was paler than he used to be, and that a change had come over his manner. It was tense and restless. A certain inward repose, which had been characteristic of him, was gone.

"So you remember me, after all!" he said, with a smile that came and went abruptly.

"Yes; I remember everything," was her reply.

"Well, I am glad you have c-come to that conclusion. In New York, you know, one can't be sure that a friendship will last over night. Are you living here?"

"Yes — I have been."

"I n-noticed when I met you — some time ago — you seemed to have acquaintances. I don't remem-

ber your ever having spoken of them to me. Have you known Judge Muhlbach long? He is said to make himself very agreeable to ladies."

Nell received this in silence. After the first words Warren had turned, and walked by her side up the avenue. They were approaching Fiftieth street. The white marble walls of the Roman Catholic church rose before them.

"Have you ever been in there?" she asked.

"Never."

"Will you come in a little while, so that I can say something to you?"

They entered, and the spacious brightness of the interior, so much more American than Roman, opened around them and above them. There seemed to be nothing going on; a few people were walking about here and there, and others were sitting in pews, listening, perhaps, to the still small voice in their own souls, for no other voice was audible. Nell and Warren came to a pew on a side aisle, behind one of the great pillars of an arch, and established themselves there, in a reasonably complete seclusion. Neither of them had been in Europe, and the edifice seemed to them grand and large.

"How different from our little meeting-house in Hickory!" Nell remarked.

It was a chance observation, but it went to both their hearts. It brought the old wooden church before them, where they had sat beside each other many a Sunday, and heard Parson Barret preach his sermon, — long before they knew New York even by name. And with this memory came others, until the immediate past seemed fantastic and unsubstantial, and only those childish days real.

"Why did you leave Hickory?" asked Warren, after a pause.

"I was lonely — and an old friend of mine invited me to stay at her house, now that her husband is dead."

"You were lonely? Oh, you mean without your mother!"

"I don't know. At any rate, here I am. I have seen you several times."

"Why w-wouldn't you speak to me?"

"Because," replied Nell, with the simple directness which was one of the indications of her strength, "I had refused to come here with you, and I wished not to interfere with you, unless there were need."

"Yes, you refused," he said; and after a moment he added quickly, "Has the need come, then, for interfering, as you call it?"

"I wanted to ask you about a friend of yours, Mr. Drayton. What sort of a man is he?"

"Drayton? He and my father were in college together. He's a great fellow, — about the ablest man in New York, to say the least of him."

"Has he been good to you?"

"As if I were his own son. He has given me his confidence, and everything except his money; he knows I don't want that. How are you interested in him?"

"Does he treat you so because he cares for you, or why?"

"He believes in me. We b-believe in each other. We shall do great things together. You will know before long."

"I know something already," said Nell, turning towards him.

"Are you sure?" returned he with a smile. "You know a great deal, then."

"If I meant to do a dangerous and wicked thing," she continued, "and had a friend whom I loved, I would not send him where the danger was, and stay in hiding myself. And yet you call Mr. Drayton a friend."

Warren looked at her. "What do you know?" he demanded.

"Mr. Drayton means to betray his country, and he is going to put you forward as the traitor."

"Who told you that?" he asked below his breath.

"That can make no difference. Why have you consented to such a thing, Warren?"

"It would have been no friend of freedom and honesty who put those w-words in your mouth. If I'm a traitor, then so was Martin Luther and William Tell. When thieves and swindlers find themselves checked, then they cry 'Treason!' You haven't heard the other side."

"I believe that our country was given to us by God; and America would not be America if it were not a republic. If it is governed by thieves instead of by honest men, it is not because we are a republic. You are only a man like other men; how can you tell how you would use supreme power if you had it? Even if you did no other wrong, you would have destroyed the best hope of all the nations of the world; and I would rather see you dead, Warren, than live to do that!"

Warren's face flushed. "That might easily be," he said. "I have no reason to suppose that it makes much difference to you whether I'm alive or not."

Nell bit her lip and was silent.

"But since I am alive," he went on, passionately, "I mean to do the work that comes to my hand, and with all my might. I was not made to be idle. And you are not the one who should blame me if the work is not to your liking. It is your fault that my only ambition is not to make you happy."

"You don't do yourself justice, Warren," said she, gently. "You asked me to marry you, not because you loved me, but because you thought I expected it, and needed your protection. You were ready to hamper yourself with me for the sake of doing what you thought was right. Only to make me happy would be a poor ambition; but to sacrifice yourself for the right is noble; can't you do it now, as you did then?"

"So you thought I didn't love you?" he asked pulling at his mustache.

"You never even said you did," returned she, with a faint smile.

"Well, to tell the truth, I thought I didn't love you too. But the worst is, that I found out afterwards that I did; and that has made a great difference to me ever since. However, since you never loved me, it amounts to the same thing in the end."

She put her hand on his, and looked in his face. Such a look Warren Bell never saw again in the

eyes of any woman. He beheld heaven for a moment,— but a heaven he could not possess. She did not speak,— at least he heard nothing; there was a humming in his ears.

He drew back, and rubbed his hand over his forehead.

"I am to be married next week," he said, and gave a short, low laugh.

They both sat silent a while. The great white cathedral seemed oppressive and dark. At last Nell arose slowly, supporting herself with her hand on the edge of the pew. She was very pale.

"Will you forgive me, Warren?" she asked.

"If there is anything to forgive, there is t-too much."

He also arose mechanically, and they left the pew and moved down the aisle. At the door, she said, "We did not come to speak of this. Do you still mean to let that man use you?"

"I mean to please myself," returned he, doggedly. "I will live to be something better or worse than a woman's fool."

Nell stood at the top of the steps while he descended to the pavement and turned down the avenue. When he was out of sight she returned to the cathedral, and sat again in the same pew which

they had just left. Whether she prayed or meditated, or merely rested after the nervous strain of such an encounter, I know not ; but when she again went forth, the words on her lips were, " Warren, my darling ! "

CHAPTER XXI.

A CORNER IN PRESIDENTS.

EVERYTHING had gone smoothly with the conspirators. The new political party had been started with great enthusiasm, and their candidate, though not a man widely known, was well spoken of by those who professed to know him; and his previous obscurity was the worst charge that his opponents could find to bring against him. He was a brawny six-footer from the West, with an atmosphere about him of freedom, simplicity, and rugged worth. He was a man of the people, — an American of Americans. The other two candidates, whatever their practical advantages, had not the charm of novelty; they had been before the public for many years. One of them, it was conceded, had not much chance; but it was hoped that when the campaign had proceeded far enough to show the drift of popular opinion the partisans of the weaker man would combine with the stronger party, in order, at all events, to whip the "outsider;" of course, it was also possible that the outsider, like the fox in

the fable, might capture the game for which the two others were contending. But this was at best but a possibility; and Drayton fully understood the importance of admitting no uncertainties in this matter; it must be heads I win, tails you lose — now or never. He had framed his plans accordingly, as he had already explained to Warren.

"This candidate of ours seems a very honest fellow," the latter had remarked. "If you have designs against his integrity, I guess you've mistaken your man. He would make a good enough president, I dare say, but not a very pliable puppet."

"I never corrupt any man," Drayton had replied, "only when a man is already rotten, I apply his rottenness to my purposes, as a farmer uses manure. You are right as to our candidate: he is honest, so far as I know, — I should not have ventured to risk a thief in such a campaign as this, — but he is ignorant and obstinate, and can therefore be easily led by the nose. He has vanity too. There will be no difficulty about him at all."

"Well, if we e-lect him."

"Nothing short of his death can prevent that."

"That is a hard saying," observed Warren, shaking his head.

"It is perfectly simple," Drayton replied, smiling.

"The only reason you and everybody else think otherwise is because you are looking in the wrong direction, — at him, instead of at the true *deus ex machina*."

"And who may he be?"

"Our most dangerous antagonist, of course; the man who is to unite both the regular parties. He has ten times the strength of our man to-day and double that of his special opponent. Now, what will happen is this: at the crucial moment of the campaign, — and that is not far off, — this redoubtable champion will be smitten with a mortal illness. All men are mortal; but I can even tell you the precise disease from which he will suffer: malignant cancer in the region of the heart. He will be taken to Florida or to New Mexico, — some place where the climate is good and the newspapers few, — and from there will come news that he is not expected to survive a week; that his recovery is impossible. The fate of a republic cannot be dependent on the progress of a cancer, and the voters who had rallied to the moribund candidate, being unable to return to their first allegiance at that late hour, will have no choice left but to unite with his supporters to make the election of our Western pioneer unanimous. Then when all is settled, and

he of the cancer dead and buried so far as the public recollection goes, he will reappear very quietly as president of a railway system, bringing him in from seventy-five to a hundred thousand a year. That is about what his illness will cost us, and it is worth every cent of the money."

It was arranged that Warren's marriage should take place a day or two before the candidate in question was smitten down with his political cancer. During the uproar, consternation, and confusion consequent upon this event there would be opportunity for a quiet month in some Southern retreat for the bride and bridegroom. Serious work would not begin again for Warren until the ensuing February or thereabouts; but it might be a long while before he got another undisturbed vacation.

Meanwhile it was the young man's business to make himself agreeable to his betrothed; and he did his best, though a keen observer might have fancied that he never succeeded so well as when he let her alone. Lizzie seemed very shy, much more so than what little Warren knew of her previously would have led him to expect. It was as if all the fastidious proprieties so carefully instilled into her mind by her French training, and so heedlessly neglected

since, had suddenly returned upon her in full force. She would rather Warren kissed her hand than her cheek ; and she acquiesced when he did not kiss her at all. As this arrangement was not so intolerable to the lover as it ought to have been, the two young people soon attained a decorum of demeanor that would have done credit to a couple of Shakers. At the same time it should be said that Warren, who believed that Lizzie really cared for him, interpreted her conduct in a way most creditable to her delicacy and purity of soul, and respected and esteemed her more than he had ever done before. He was an honest man at heart, and he was resolved she should never have cause to complain of neglect or unfaithfulness on his part ; but he was as unhappy as he knew how to be, and sometimes wondered whether Lizzie were aware of it. He could not know that she cherished a secret misery that put his to shame. They looked at and conversed with each other, but they saw and thought of quite other persons and things. The only one who enjoyed the situation was Drayton ; and he was the blindest of the three. Tom Peekskill, indeed, wore a look of treacherous satisfaction on his face ; but he could scarcely be termed happy, — unless an assassin can be said to be so when he hears the footsteps of his

unsuspecting victim approaching nearer and more near.

The wedding was now but three days off; but it was to be in the last degree quiet and private. Drayton desired this, because he was unwilling just at this juncture to have the public attention in any way drawn to him; and Lizzie had her own reasons for not opposing the arrangement; while, as to Warren, his chief study was to divert his mind from dwelling on the subject at all. They were to be married, therefore, in morning dress, at Drayton's house, and were to take the afternoon train southward as soon as the ceremony was over. Lizzie's trousseau had been got ready, and was being packed, under the superintendence of her maid. On this afternoon her father, who had ordered her a splendid set of diamonds, was just on the point of paying a visit to the jeweller's to give some directions about the setting, when there was a ring at the door, and a young lady was admitted, who said:—

“Does Mr. Drayton live here?”

She was handsome, and becomingly dressed, and her voice was melodious. Drayton who was in the hall putting on his overcoat, came forward, and said:—

"I am Mr. Drayton. To whom have I the honor—?"

"My name is Anthony," replied the young lady. "I knew Mr. Warren Bell when we were both children. I have something important to say to you."

"I am happy to meet any friend of Warren Bell," said Drayton, politely. "Will you come into the drawing-room? Mr. Bell is not in; he will be sorry to have missed your call."

"I did not come to see him. What I have to say is to you only."

Drayton looked sharply at her, wondering what she could be and what she wanted. The idea entered his mind that she might have some claim upon Warren,—something calculated to interfere with his matrimonial projects. She was handsome enough to be a formidable rival even to Lizzie; and yet she was a lady in the best sense of the word. He was puzzled.

"How can I serve you?" he asked.

"I have come to you alone, Mr. Drayton," said Nell, "and without the knowledge of any one, to give you warning of a danger."

"A danger? ah! that is news!" muttered Drayton, folding his arms and regarding her keenly with

his bright black eyes. "Such an act of disinterested friendship from an entire stranger is more than I had a right to expect."

"I have no friendship for you," returned Nell. "I come because the danger to Warren Bell is even greater than to you, and I wish to save him."

"Well, that is certainly explicit so far. The next question is, what is the nature of the danger?"

"You have enemies, and they have found out your plans. If you go on they will ruin you."

"I have enemies, then? I had supposed that a quiet man like myself might hope to escape enmity. Whom have I offended?"

"Every one who loves America, and many who love only themselves," replied Nell, her eyes beginning to sparkle.

"My dear young lady," said Drayton, smiling, but now fully on his guard, "you have been misinformed. I am a private man—wholly detached from politics. I flatter myself that I too love America, but I leave the management of her affairs to other hands. You have either mistaken me for some one else, or you have been deceived."

"You wrote this," she returned, producing the famous pamphlet from her muff; "and you intend to do such things as it suggests."

"It is one thing to assert that, and quite another to prove it," said Drayton, still smiling.

"The proof will be given in a few days without my help if you deny it now."

"Let us come to the point, Miss — or Mrs. — Anthony," said Drayton, changing his tone and sitting erect in his chair. "What do you want? Has Warren Bell wronged you in any way? Are you the emissary of any third party? Do you require money? or what? Pardon my bluntness, but the shortest way is best."

"I want you to become what you say you are — a private man, with no interest in the management of this country. You must take back the bribe you offered to that man to pretend illness and give up his candidacy. You must let the people govern themselves, and not steal their liberties away from them."

Drayton had some great qualities and among them was the ability to recognize defeat. He saw at once that this strange young lady knew what she was talking about and that further denial would be useless. The shock of learning that his secrets were betrayed was terrible to him, but he continued to suppress all outward signs of it. His alert and elastic mind was at once busy in taking the measure of the new situation and devising means to meet it.

"You have said enough to command my confidence," he began, in an easy tone. "Without making any definite admissions I may say that I should be sorry to know that what you have just said was common property. Now, can you tell me whether—supposing, for a moment, that you relinquish all idea of assuming a hostile attitude towards us yourself—there are any other persons who would so act, independently of you?"

"That is the reason of my being here," Nell replied. "If I were to die to-night your plans would be crushed just the same. But if you go in time to those who mean to attack you and show them that you will give all this up voluntarily it would save you from open exposure and ruin. But it is not for your sake," she added, lifting her head, while her cheeks flushed. "I would not speak a word to save you from punishment, for you have taken advantage of the generosity and nobility of an honest man to persuade him to act the part of a traitor!"

Drayton was feeling too sick at heart to attempt to defend himself; he was rather anxious to conciliate his accuser, if he might. This was not a time to multiply enemies. It was illustrative of one of the differences between his mind and War-

ren's, that whereas Warren, in his preoccupation with personal matters, had utterly failed to realize the fact that Nell's appeal to him to forbear was in truth a warning to repent in season, instead of waiting until compulsion was applied from without, — and had consequently neglected even to mention the danger to Drayton, — the latter had instantly grasped the situation in all its bearings, and was even now estimating the chances for and against the only possible means for parrying the attack.

"There is one thing I should like to have you believe," he said, grasping his long beard in his hand, and gazing steadfastly at her, "and that is, that I fully share whatever esteem and regard you may entertain for Warren Bell. His abilities and his qualities are to me as admirable and lovable as those of any man I ever knew. For many years past I have been planning what you would perhaps call treason, but which seemed to me — and still seems — the only possible means of preserving the union and prosperity of the country we both love. But my designs, in all human probability, would never have attained practical shape had it not been for Warren. He possessed all that I lacked in the way of active and personal force. I saw in him — young as he is — a man capable of

standing at the head of the greatest nation in the world, and of so acting as to render his name immortal, along with those of Washington and Lincoln. He was to be the heir of all my aspirations; and I wish I could impart to you my own vision of the splendor of his career. My ambition was an abstract desire to exterminate, root and branch, the abuses and disasters which are inseparable (in this age of the world at least) from our present form of government. But I was willing and glad to see this result realized by him rather than by myself, — only to feel that I had been instrumental in providing him with the opportunity to become what nature had already qualified him to be. I don't know, of course, who has betrayed me; but I wish I could hope to see you share my conviction that whoever has done so has inflicted a vital injury both on the country and on Warren Bell."

"I cannot help you," replied Nell, in a gentle tone, — for the eloquent fascination of Drayton's voice and manner had not failed to move her somewhat, — "and I never meant to take any part with your enemies. It can make no difference to you whether or not I think as you do."

"I have seen enough of you to feel otherwise," he answered with a certain grand courtesy. "There is

one thing for which I care more than for success, and that is the appreciation of pure and honorable minds."

"I don't know; you may have intended better than I thought," said she, in a low voice.

"And now," resumed Drayton, "it only remains to ask you to whom I am to go to make my surrender—if it must be so."

"I believe Judge Muhlbach is the most active against you," returned Nell. "Do you know him?"

Drayton's eyes kindled for a moment, and he pressed his lips together. "I have had some acquaintance with him," he said, briefly. "I will see him to-morrow."

He had gained what he wanted, — the assurance that Nell personally would not act against him, and the information of who was his real antagonist. How Muhlbach had penetrated his secret he could not conjecture; but his opinion of the venality of the man gave him hope that he would be able to effect some compromise with him. He could offer the Judge temptations which he must be more than human and judicial to resist. As to "surrendering," he hoped the time for that was yet far distant. At all events, he would not be beaten without a

desperate and persistent struggle. Meanwhile, it was not without significance to him that, at parting, his austere young visitor gave him her hand.

Nell left the house and walked slowly down the street, deep in meditation. The interview had shaken her faith in her own point of view a little; she did not like Drayton, but it seemed to her impossible that a man of such speech and presence should be a villain. How different he was from Judge Muhlbach! — and it was Muhlbach who was his enemy. Was there no meaning in that? While she was revolving these things she heard a hasty step behind her, and a woman's voice addressed her by name. She turned, and beheld a very pale and pretty young lady, clad in a long seal-skin cloak and a hat, who said, breathlessly, "You are Miss Anthony, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I am Lizzie Drayton, — Mr. Drayton's daughter. I have followed you; I could not speak to you in the house. I wanted to tell you — ask you something. I heard something of what you and father were saying. You — are a friend of Warren Bell?"

"Yes; what of him?"

"You know he is to be married — in a few days?"

"Yes."

"Well, it was to me,—I was to be his wife. But I don't want to marry him; I can't marry him! And he does not care for me, either. It is father's idea; but it mustn't be; it is impossible!"

"Why don't you tell him and your father so, then?" demanded Nell, astonished and pained. "Why do you come to me?"

"Oh, I couldn't tell him! I couldn't explain. Father would kill me almost! But I thought, since he didn't love me, he must love some one else; and when I saw you, and heard you speak, I thought it must be you that he loved. Forgive me. I know I've no right to speak so to you; but if you knew how miserable I am!"

"Warren Bell will be true to whatever woman he marries," said Nell, steadily, but with a deep blush. "His wife need not fear any one else, certainly not me."

"Oh, now I have made you angry!" moaned Lizzie, pressing her little ungloved hands together nervously. "If I could only explain to you how it is! But you do love him, and he loves you; I know it! Will you do something—that would make you and him happy, and save me?" In the eagerness of the appeal she put her hands on Nell's arms, and gazed eagerly in her face.

"I will do anything I can ; what is it ?" said Nell, moved to a compassion that overcame her perplexity and suspicion.

Lizzie bent forward and whispered in her ear, "Run away with him ! Be married to him yourself, to-morrow ! Think how happy you will be ! It will save us all ! Oh, say yes !"

Nell shuddered and drew back.

"If you had known me you would not have dared to speak so to me," she said, in a tremulous voice. "If you were good, you would not have thought of it."

"Oh, I am not good ; I know that !" returned Lizzie, suddenly falling into an apathetic, half-cynical tone. "I only wanted, if possible, not to be worse, and I thought you might help me. Well, I beg your pardon. Good-by." And she turned abruptly and was gone before Nell had time to speak again. The short afternoon was already over, and in a few moments Lizzie was out of sight in the gathering dusk.

CHAPTER XXII.

SUSAN'S IMMORALITY.

WHEN Nell Anthony reached home she found Susan full of talk about the Home, which had safely passed through the doubts and peril of its pre-natal state, — Uncle Joseph having gracefully acceded to Susan's proposal regarding payment, — and was now fully prepared for occupation. Indeed, it had been advertised in the papers for several days past, and paragraphs descriptive and laudatory had appeared in the "Talk of the Day" columns. The names of the promoters were not mentioned, but it was understood to be owned and personally administered by "ladies of the highest refinement and social position." These squibs were inserted under the influence of the amiable Judge, who wished thus to indicate that he bore no ill-will to the enterprise on account of the snubbing he had sustained in connection with it. Moreover, the Judge was a tenacious man, and would not desist from a pursuit on account of a few stumbles at first starting out.

Susan had all her arrangements made to start for

the Home after dinner, and spend the night there, and had ordered the carriage to be in waiting at eight o'clock. She purred over the affair like a comfortable cat over a saucer of cream. But Nell did not respond with her usual cordiality, and her appearance was so distraught that Susan soon perceived it.

"I'm sure you must have a headache," she suggested.

Nell, who was reclining on a sofa, with her check on her hand, slowly turned her eyes on her friend, and by and by she said:—

"Susie, I want to ask your advice."

"My dear, you must be ill!" cried Susan, jumping up in real alarm; for so extraordinary a proposition could indicate nothing less than incipient delirium.

"No; but I am tired of wondering what I had better do, and I want you to decide. Suppose you had a dear friend who was wishing to do something that you thought was unwise, and perhaps wrong, but at any rate he had set his heart on it, and it was a question that involved his whole life and career. And suppose another man had determined to prevent him from doing this thing, because he was his enemy. Do you understand so far?"

"So you and this other man would both want to

prevent him, only you out of love, and he out of enmity. Yes; well, dear!"

"But then," continued Nell, sitting up on the sofa, and brushing back a strand of hair that had fallen across her face, "you saw how much your friend desired this thing, so that all the happiness he could expect to have—and he was not very happy—depended on it, and you reflected that perhaps you were mistaken in thinking it unwise and wrong,—for how could you be certain that you knew better than he?—might you not bring yourself to believe at last that it would be better to let him have his way, and leave the rest to Providence?"

"Well, perhaps I might. But then, my dear," Susan added, after a few moments' cogitation, "there is still his enemy, you know. He wouldn't let your friend have his way, no matter what you did."

"Yes; that is what I am coming to," Nell replied. "Now, this enemy knew you, and had once asked you to do him a great favor. You had refused it at the time, but now you feel sure that if you were to offer to do him that favor on condition that he let your friend alone he would consent. Would you grant him that favor?"

"I don't know. I suppose it would depend on what sort of a favor it was," returned Susan, her interest fully aroused. "Would it be anything very difficult?"

"Yes; nothing could seem more difficult," said Nell, with a tremor in her voice.

"Then I wouldn't do it, — unless I loved my friend very much indeed."

"Yes, very much, — better than anything in the world!"

"O Nell! don't ask me. You frighten me. Tell me who the friend is."

"Warren Bell."

"O Nell! Why, of course, — I might have known. And it is about that political affair to be sure. But, Nell, who is the enemy? O my dear! surely you don't mean?" —

"I mean Judge Muhlbach."

Susan jumped up. "And what was the favor?"

"To be married to him."

Susan gave a gasp and sank back in her chair.

But presently she sat up again. "Nell, it is wicked!" she exclaimed, violently. "You will do no such horrid thing! My darling, go and give yourself to one man because, actually because, you love another! I declare I'd take a gun and shoot

him first!" She stopped to wipe the tears from her face, and then added, "Why don't you marry Warren Bell? Do you mean to say that you couldn't make him happier than all the politics and everything else in the world?"

"There is a reason why that is impossible."

"What reason, I should like to know?"

"Well, never mind about that, Susie. There are some strange things about it that—I hardly know what to think of myself; but I believe it would be easier for him, in other ways, if he knew I was married. And what would be the use of my being alive if I didn't serve the people I love? I needn't have asked your advice after all. I'll do it! I'll go to Judge Muhlbach now and tell him so." And she rose to her feet.

At this crisis Susan developed faculties and resources quite beyond the ordinary scope of her nature. As cripples have been known to walk, and the dumb to speak, under supreme pressure of circumstances, so did this guileless woman suddenly become a diplomatist and a double-dealer. She was convinced that Nell was temporarily beside herself, and she felt the absolute necessity of restraining her until she recovered her reason. This could not be done by force; it must be managed by subterfuge.

And, without troubling herself about her own soul, or about anything except her love for her friend, Susan lied boldly and freely and with excellent judgment.

"I suppose you are right, dear," she said, "you know you always are; and I am always a fool to doubt it. It does seem hard that you should have to sacrifice yourself; but, of course, one has to choose the lesser of two evils. And I do think there are worse men in the world than Uncle Joseph; and I'm sure he'll do everything possible to make you comfortable. But, Nell, do you know, now I come to think of it, I wouldn't go to see him to-night, if I were you. This isn't like the country, you know. New York people are very particular about etiquette in such things, and they might think it queer if it were known that you went to see him about such a thing so late in the evening. But I'll tell you how we might manage. You take the carriage at eight o'clock and go up to the Home, and I'll run around to Uncle Joseph's and tell him that you want to see him at once on important business. Very likely he'll come right along with me; but if he should be engaged, at any rate he'll come to-morrow. That will be much more conventional and proper than your going after him,

and it will make it easier for you, don't you think so?"

"Yes; perhaps it would," returned Nell, wearily. "I didn't think of that. It would be very kind of you, Susie. But make him understand that he must come; and don't let him be later than to-morrow morning, or Mr. Drayton will have seen him, and it will be no use."

"Oh, you may trust me for that!" exclaimed Susan, with her honest smile, which covered an abyss of falsehood. "And, meanwhile, dear, let's have our dinner, and talk about something else. You must have all your wits about you when you meet him, you know."

And thereupon this Machiavelli in petticoats began to be sprightly, anecdotal, and discursive to a degree which astonished herself in the retrospect, and beguiled Nell into an unusual amount of smiles and idle talk. Thus they got through with their dinner very well; and then Susan, with a thankful heart, saw Nell safely into the carriage, and herself started for her Uncle Joseph's, to tell him that if he did not make his attack upon Drayton that very night he would be too late, the country would be lost, and Uncle Joseph himself consigned forever to disgrace and obscurity. For such was the manner in which

Susan proposed to keep her promise to her dearest friend.

She went in a fervor of enthusiasm, and felt more virtuous than she ever had done when on an errand which orthodox morality would have approved. She rung at the door, and was informed by the servant (who knew her) that a gentlemen had just called to see the Judge, but would probably not be long. "That's all right, Charles," Susan replied. "I don't mind waiting. What room are they in?"

"The dining-room, Mrs. Wayne."

"Oh! then I'll just go up to the sitting-room, so that when they have done their business I shall know it. Never mind announcing me; I'll take care of myself." And she went upstairs.

The dining-room and the sitting-room adjoined each other, and both could be entered separately from the upper hall. When Susan entered the latter apartment she found the gas turned low. The door communicating with the dining-room was almost closed, but not quite. A narrow, vertical line of light showed through the crevice, and the voices of the two men on the other side could be plainly heard. Susan was debating whether to close the door completely or to go somewhere else when a

word from the Judge determined her to do neither.

"It's very obliging of you, Mr. Drayton," he was saying, "but the truth is, the matter is not under my control, and the other parties must speak for themselves."

"It is under your control if you choose to make it so," another voice replied (that of Drayton). "I am in a mood to be accommodating. Say a million down, and your choice of offices for yourself and your friends within a year. There's no limit to what you might do. And, finally, this affair aside, I would much rather have you with us than not."

"Well, that's just my luck," said Muhlbach. "Your offer comes at the wrong time. If you had only thought of making it, say about the time of your resignation from the Compensation Fund, we could have hit it off then to a dot."

"Come, Judge, let bygones be bygones."

"Bless you, I bear no grudge. I made a shrewd guess at the time as to who sent that square-headed young fellow after me. But you were too sharp; I couldn't fix it on you. I never could see to the bottom of you, anyway, Drayton. What possessed you to back that way against us, and to pick up

with a fellow under thirty, who didn't know how to entertain an offer of — ah — accommodation politely?"

"He was the man I needed, that's all. I was going in for something more than rigging a corner, you understand. When you are going to tackle the American people, and to hold them in hand, you want a man as bold as a lion and as straight as a die, and with his life before instead of behind him. Damaged goods, or goods that can be damaged, won't do. Warren Bells don't grow on every bush."

"He's a cheeky fellow, and plucky, and brainy, too, I allow; but I guess the proper tests would show that he's made of flesh and blood, like the rest of us, — and pockets into the bargain!"

"There was a time when you might have applied them, — and I think you did."

"Oh, I belonged to the light artillery!" returned Muhlbach, laughing. "I don't pretend to come into competition with a hundred-ton Armstrong, like you."

"If I had ever offered him a cent, I should have seen the last of him," Drayton said. "I had work enough to get him to accede to the necessary manipulation of the other men. He wanted everything brought out in open daylight."

"Well, for my part, I prefer a man I can work with. I don't cotton to saints much. And I don't know why you should. You don't belong to that gang yourself. Between you and me and the bottle, you know that cloth operation of yours in '63 will never be inscribed in the Golden Book."

Drayton was silent.

"And they do say, you know," continued the Judge, "that Mrs. Drayton's early departure to a more congenial world was not entirely due to congenital delicacy of constitution."

"G—d—you, sir!" cried Drayton, starting up, and striking his hand upon the table. "The time has not yet come when I can be insulted with impunity. I came here with an offer—to take or to leave. Let me have my answer, and be gone!"

"There! there! my dear man, keep cool! No offence in the world. Nothing but my cursed curiosity; it always was my weak point. As to your answer, I've already given you the best answer I've got. But I'll tell you what you ought to do: you ought to see the fellow who peached on you, and gave us the information. He's the man to make terms with, if they're to be made. You know who he is, of course?"

"The world is a small place," returned Drayton,

gritting his teeth together. "I shall run across him sooner or later. At present I confess I can't identify him."

"Why, here he is now!" exclaimed the Judge, as the door at the back of the dining-room opened. "Just in the nick of time, like a man in a play. Drayton, I think you know my friend, Tom Peekskill?"

"Drayton thought he knew me, too," said Tom, coming forward, with a swagger in his tone. "But we live and learn, — the best of us do. Well, sir," he continued, turning to Drayton, "here I am, at your service, as the cabbage said to the cow."

"What have I to do with you, Peekskill?" demanded Drayton, contemptuously. "You must be drunk. I have nothing to say to you, sir."

"Please yourself, old man," Tom replied, lightly.

"Only, I'm the little bird that whispered the tidings of great joy to the Judge here."

"You? You are a liar!" cried Drayton, still contemptuously. "You had no information to give."

"Ah! that's just where you make a mistake. I got the straight tip, — and from near home, too."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean Lizzie. I call her Betsy, for short," said Tom, with a laugh.

"Look here, Peekskill," said Drayton, lowering his voice to an ominous monotone, "your drunkenness or your insanity, whichever it is, shall not save you. You know my power over you; and the time has come to use it. You will leave this room at once, and this city to-morrow morning. If you ever let me see or hear of you again in any part of the civilized world you will rot in jail from that day forth, like the thief and forger you are! Now be off!"

"*That* for your power over me!" retorted Tom, snapping his fingers. "How would you like to swallow a slice out of your own loaf, old gentleman? So you doubt my statement as to the source of my information, eh? Well, suppose you cast your eye over that letter — and that — and that; and I have more here when you're ready for 'em! Recognize the chirography, don't you? No forgery about that, is there? Expresses herself well, doesn't she? and signs her name prettily, too. Oh, Betsy and I have been at work a long time! We haven't had any secrets from each other for the last year or more, — not one. I give you my word."

While Tom was delivering himself in this arch fashion Drayton had been steadily reading through the letters. As he did so his face assumed an

expression of anguish so ghastly that the Judge, after muttering a word or two in an undertone to Peekskill, quietly went out of the room. He had delicate sensibilities, and did not care to have them exasperated unnecessarily. Tom and Drayton were alone when the latter raised his eyes from the letters and gazed at him.

"I gather from these letters," he began, in a dissonant voice, which he seemed unable to modulate as usual, "that you have been secretly paying court to my daughter, and have so far won upon her as to induce her to tell you things which I had confided to her honor, and to give you the right to — claim her hand." Here Tom was about to speak; but Drayton held up his hand to impose silence. "I wish to say," he went on, moistening his lips, and with manifest effort, "that I accept the situation which my daughter has seen fit to bring about. Her wishes are my wishes. You know in what light I have hitherto regarded you; but she has discovered in you qualities which fit you to be her husband. I — I am willing to receive you as my son-in-law. Come to my house to-morrow, and" —

"Now just listen to me, Drayton," Tom interrupted, half seating himself on the table, with his hands in his pockets. "You and I are men of the

world, and you ought to know that all that talk isn't going to draw any wool over my eyes. You have treated me about as you liked for several years past. I have been waiting my chance to get even with you, and I'm not going to let you off quite so easily. I want to see you dance to the same tune that you've been making me dance to. I want to see how you look on your marrow-bones. You say you're willing to receive me for your son-in-law. But suppose I was to say that I'm not in the humor, just at present, to receive you as my father-in-law? What would you think of that?"

"I don't think I catch your meaning," said Drayton, huskily.

"Say, old gentleman, your wits are getting rusty aint they? Well, I put it plainer, if you will have it. It isn't customary, as the world goes, for a man to marry a woman after he's got all he wants out of her, except as a special favor and condescension. Well, that's about the way it is between Betsy and me. I've no more use for her, — that's the short of it. I'm sorry for her, and all that; but I'm not bound to give her my name because she chose to make a fool of herself. My advice to you is to take her to Europe, or Patagonia, or some such place, and give it out that she's a widow whose

husband died three months after marriage ; or marry her to your friend Warren Bell, if you can."

When Tom ceased Drayton was standing in the position which he had assumed when the first sentences were uttered, — with one hand partly raised, and his lips parted. He remained motionless, like a man of wax, with a look of terror frozen in his eyes. So might a man have appeared who had been stricken dead by some hideous spectre. For what seemed a long time he stood so still that Tom began to believe he was dead. But at last he spoke, in a thin, astounded voice.

"My daughter !" he said.

There was another pause. Then Tom got off the table, sauntered up to him, still with his hands in his pockets.

"Say, look here !" he said. "I'm not going to be too hard on you. I've had my fun, and I guess you won't forget me in a hurry. I've smashed your scheme, and played the devil with your arrangements generally, and now I'm pretty near through. I'll tell you what I'll do with you. You give me a blank check, to fill up as my convenience may dictate, and to-morrow you and I and Lizzie will drive over to the magistrate's, and I'll do the right thing by her. But I give you fair warning that you'll have

to look out for her after that. I shall trot off on a vacation, and in the course of a year or two you can get her a divorce on the ground of desertion, — see? That's my ultimatum; and if you don't take it, why, then you'll have to take the consequences, — and she, too, — that's all!"

There was a decanter of brandy on the table; Drayton took it, poured out a glass of the liquor, and drank it off. The blood returned to his cheek, and his eyes brightened. He drew himself up to his full height, and gazed curiously at Tom, who stood within arm's reach of him. His right hand still rested on the decanter.

"You have mistaken your man, Peekskill," he said, quietly. "You played your last card the day you deceived my daughter. To save her I would gladly have given you my whole fortune. To save her public reputation, or my own, I would not give you a cent. As the suitor whom she had accepted you might have married her; as the scoundrel who has ruined her you would receive at my hands only the reception due to a scoundrel. To-morrow will see you either a fugitive from justice or a convicted felon; but meanwhile" —

It was done so instantaneously that Susan — who, quaking with fear and curiosity, had been

peeping through the crack of the door — saw the effect before she realized the act. Drayton had grasped the neck of the massive cut-glass decanter, and brought the weapon down with the utmost force of his powerful arm full upon Peekskill's upturned face. The decanter flew into fragments; Tom was hurled to the floor senseless and disfigured; and Drayton, after looking down at him for a moment, turned and walked out of the room by one door, just as Judge Muhlbach, who had heard the fall, came in at another.

As for Susan, as soon as the general preoccupation of the household in the collapsed Peekskill had left the coast clear, she made her escape with what secrecy and despatch she might, and proceeded to One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street as fast as the elevated railway could carry her.

CHAPTER XXIII

LIFE AND DEATH.

ABOUT half-past nine o'clock that evening, Warren was passing the Windsor Hotel, when he was hailed by a mellow Hibernian voice, and saw Mr. Terence O'Ryan coming down the steps.

"Well, and have ye heard the news, Mr. Bell?" that gentleman inquired.

"About the illness of the Republican candidate? That's stale."

"So 'tis; and a bit of a lie into the bargain, I'm thinking. But no; ye're behind the times. It's the whaling that blackguard Tom Peckskill's been gettin', I mane."

"W-what's that? Who did it?"

"Who in the world but our distinguished friend and your prospective father-in-law, Mr. Seth Drayton. Faith, I wish I'd been prisent to hold the sponge. Bedad! Tom's nose is smeared all over his face, and he'll have to bite off the ends of his cigars with his penknife for the future, for eight of his front teeth are gone down his throat, — and his

havin' two upper lips instead of one won't make up for it."

"Drayton! Where did it happen?"

"Judge Muhlbach was the stakeholder and" —

"What was it about?"

"Well, now, ye're axin' me the same question that I've shook my head at a hundred and twenty times in the last hour, Mr. Bell, which is as much as to say, I could tell if I would; and, I may add in sthriect confidence, I would tell if I knew. The truth is at the bottom of the well, and all the boys is pourin' down whiskey to try and see if they can't float it up to the top; but hitherto without result. Howiver, I've some notions of my own on the subject, and, you bein' yourself, I'll be after impartin' 'em to ye. Tom was at the Hoffman night before last, as tight as a lord, and I took him under my charge, to get him out of the way and to bed. So, as we were goin' along, says he, 'I've got that darned beggar's goose cooked for him, and I'll make him swallow it wrong end foremost,' — or words to that effect. 'Who's that?' says I. 'None o' your business!' says he; 'The gal and I put up the job on him; and a nice domestic palaver she and Warren Bell will have when they go on their honeymoon!' and with that he took to chucklin', like the

drunken spalpeen he is, — bad luck to him ! Now, you may think different, Mr. Bell, — every man has his own opinion ; but it looks to me mighty like as if Tom Peekskill had been playin' a low-down game on Drayton ; and when I heard of the row this night, 'Faith,' I said, 'that's where the shoe pinches !' "

"Where is Peekskill?" asked Warren in a few moments.

"At the New York Hospital ; but he's not at all in a conversational mood, — more by token he'll never be able to talk straight again, — and no loss to the public, either."

"Have you s-seen Drayton?"

"No, I've not ; but I was just thinkin' 'twould be no bad plan to drop in and pass the time of day with him."

"Come with me," said Warren. "I must know the rights of this business at once." And they turned eastward towards Madison avenue.

"You'll likely know more about Drayton than I do," Terence remarked, as they walked along. "He's always acted square by me, and Terence O'Ryan was never the man to go back on his friends. All the same, I misdoubt he had schemes in his head that were no safer, in a country like this,

than dynamite cartridges in a blacksmith shop. There's plenty of deviltry goin' on, — no one denies that, — and the boys keep a brighter look-out for number one than they do for the rocks ahead ; but the way to stop it isn't to chuck the crew overboard and sail the ship alone. America's a mighty queer place that way ; seems like you could do about as you please, and no one bother about it ; but one particular thing you can't do, no matter if you was Washington and Lincoln and Napoleon Bonaparte, all in one skin ; and, — maybe I'm wrong, — I wouldn't be surprised at all if that was the very thing Seth Drayton's been trying his hand at."

"There's nothing like the Republic, after all !" muttered Warren, with a secret sigh.

When they reached Drayton's house O'Ryan rang the bell.

"Will Mr. Drayton be at home, my man?" he said to the servant who opened the door.

"Mr. Drayton is out, sir," began the footman ; then, recognizing Warren, he added, "Beg pardon, Mr. Bell : master said to refuse him to visitors ; but of course it don't apply to you, sir."

They entered, and, as the door closed, a sharp, violent noise resounded upstairs. They all looked at one another.

"Sure, Fourth of July don't come in winter!" said O'Ryan, with a grimace.

"Hold your tongue!" said Warren, turning pale. A minute passed; there was no further sound. "Where is Mr. Drayton?" Warren asked.

"He went up to his room over an hour ago, sir," replied the servant timorously.

"Stay here," said Warren to O'Ryan, "and don't come up unless I call you." He walked upstairs with his hat and overcoat still on. Drayton's room was the first door on the right of the landing. Warren knocked, but there was no answer. He tried the latch, and it yielded to his hand. He went in; the room was lighted, and a fire was burning in the open grate. In an easy-chair, at a table between the windows, Drayton was sitting. He had on the velvet lounging-coat which he often wore in private. He sat as if in profound thought, his head bent forward, his arms hanging loosely by his sides; his long beard swept down over his breast. He did not look up, or move, as Warren approached. But the young man had come quite close before he detected the blood that matted the beard and stained the velvet waistcoat. The man of many schemes and many millions was dead.

The revolver with which he had killed himself lay

on the floor, where it had fallen from his hand. He must have died instantly ; indeed, two minutes had not elapsed since he fired the shot. On the table beside him Warren saw a fold of white paper, which he took up with the expectation of finding a dying message written on it. But the writing was not in Drayton's hand, but in that of his daughter, and ran as follows : —

DEAREST PAPA,—You will know very soon why I can't marry Warren Bell, and why I am gone. There was nothing else to do. I did not want to be the weapon that Tom used against you. One thing led to another before I knew what I was about. I didn't know much any way. I always loved you, papa dear, although I deceived and betrayed you, and now I know that you are the only person I love in the world. But I am going, for you would be sure to make some sacrifice for me if I stayed, and I am not worth any sacrifice. I don't mean that I am going to kill myself—I shouldn't like to do that—but I must go, and you won't be able to find me, and I hope you won't try. There's one thing: I wouldn't marry Tom now, even if he wished it. He never really cared for me, and the strangest thing is that I don't believe I ever really cared for him. I don't even so much as hate him now. And yet, just think how I behaved! These wicked and terrible things seem just the same as ordinary fun, until they're done, and then you see the difference; but then it's too late. I am very sorry; but I don't half understand how it all could have happened. Try to forgive me, papa dear. Your daughter, LIZZIE.

Warren read this letter through twice, and then

put it in his pocket. It appalled him even more than the body of the man whose death it had probably caused. Standing there, and staring at the corpse, he fell into a horrible reverie, which might have ended in a further tragedy, had not Terence O’Ryan, wearying of the uncertainty down-stairs, taken the liberty to step up and see what was the matter.

Lizzie had left the house only about ten minutes before her father reëntered it, on his return from Muhlbach’s. She had taken what money she had about her (about \$1,000) and a small satchel containing some jewels and toilet articles. She had written on a blank card a name and address, copied from an advertisement in a newspaper, and, with no further equipment or ceremony, had set forth on her journey into the unknown. Crossing over to Third avenue, she entered a horse-car, and proceeded uptown. After a ride of three-quarters of an hour the conductor announced One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street, and she got out, holding in her hand the card with the address.

The evening was dark, and the street-lamps were few. Lizzie had eaten nothing since her luncheon of tea and sponge-cake, and felt weak. The mental

excitement which had sustained her during the day had subsided, leaving her depressed and forlorn. And now that she had cut herself adrift from her past life, and was face to face with a strange and untried future, the courage with which imagination had supplied her gave out. It is the details of life that make it difficult and wretched, as well as agreeable and easy. The forecasts of the mind are too sweeping and direct.

Lizzie continued to walk on, but the farther she went the more hesitating did her steps become. She was not made for heroic enterprises, — even such dismal heroism as this; nor did her pride support her as she had expected it would do. And yet she felt that it would be more impossible to return than to go on. Impossible in one way and yet so easy in another! But no; she could not face her father, after the letter she had written him. This was not a society play, — like one she had seen at a New York theatre, when, after the suffering was over, all ended happily at last, — this was real; there was no rescuer, no forgiveness, and no sympathetic audience. The people who met her passed her by without notice, or regarded her with a scrutiny that was not flattering. And yet she had been a sort of queen in New York society; nay, were she to ap-

pear in full toilet at any one of a hundred houses to-night, she would be caressed and admired. To-night, — but how to-morrow ! She went on, but she hardly knew where she was ; she did not care to know. Suddenly she began to think of the ball at which she had first met Tom Peekskill. How graceful, witty, and clever he had seemed ! How much she had laughed and talked ! How well he had led the german, and how delightfully they had danced together ! How inspiring was the music, the lights how brilliant, and how fragrant the bouquet of flowers he gave her ! And now, how dark and cold was the night, and how weary and hopeless she was !

Some men came running down the street, shouting hoarsely. A bell was ringing somewhere. There was a red glow in the sky ; and now the crowd increased, all shouting and running. They seemed to be coming towards her. Bewildered and terrified, she left the sidewalk and tried to cross the street. All was confusion and uproar. There was a clatter of galloping horses and a roar of wheels and din of bells. A man made a dash at her out of the darkness. She ran to get out of his way, stumbled, and staggered forward. The wheels and hoofs were close upon her ; something struck her violently on her side ; then the uproar dwindled,

and she seemed to hear once more the rhythmic music of the waltz, and smell the perfume of the flowers. What was she saying! — “My ideal of life is, that it should be a continual german, with new figures and favors all the time. You get all wound up, and think you are lost, and then, at the last moment, you come out all right, in a burst of music!”

She opened her eyes. The room was quiet and neat. It was early dawn, and the bed on which she lay had some flowers upon it. A lady with a grave, beautiful face sat beside her. Another lady, stout and good-natured, stood at the foot of the bed; tears were running down her cheeks. There was some one she knew in the room, but Lizzie could not see who it was: he stood behind.

“Are not you Miss Anthony?” Lizzie asked, in a whisper.

“Yes.”

“How came we here? Where is it?”

“At the place you were coming to,—at home.”

“I don’t remember. What makes my voice so faint? Am I ill? I feel no pain.”

Nell Anthony smiled. “You will have no pain any more.”

“Where is father?” Lizzie asked, after a while.

"You will meet him soon, please God."

After another pause, she asked, "Who is this standing at the head of my bed?"

He came forward, and looked down at her.

"Why, it is Warren Bell! Oh, now I understand! You do love each other after all. I was sure you did. You are going to be his wife, aren't you?"

"There are better things than marriage in the world."

"No, there is nothing better," said Lizzie; "not — not if you love each other."

"They were her last words," said Warren Bell; "and they w-were true!"

Men and women in this world do almost as they please, some following the good and some the evil; and sometimes the evil seem happy, and sometimes the good seem miserable. But the thirst for renown is never slaked; it waxes sharper with indulgence. Love of self assumes many forms, noble and ignoble; but, whether it blaze gloriously or smoulder basely, its final outcome can only be a handful of dead ashes. After so many struggles, sophistries, triumphs, and jealousies, that is the end.

But this destroying angel, born of man, has a

counterpart, whose origin is Divine, and who creates where the other consumes. This love, too, is insatiable,—but insatiable in giving, not in taking; and the more it gives, the more it has to give, and the greater is its delight in giving. But, whether that which it gives be comparatively much or little, it is always the most precious of all gifts, for it is love. The essence of the other love is death; but this love is life itself, and it is immortal, because whatever it touches it transmutes into the likeness of itself.

Between these two powers the world is divided; nor is there any human being in whose heart that division is not found; and according as the proportions vary does good or evil prevail. Often you can scarce distinguish one from the other, even in yourself, though the gulf between them is nevertheless as deep as that which separates heaven from hell. We are misled most of all by success, which seems the test of merit, but is never given in this world as a reward; it is only the most inscrutable of the dispensations of Providence.

There are many so-called philanthropists,—men who will cure the world with a patent nostrum, or a political formula, or a moral apothegm. But these infallible prescriptions, when they are ana-

lyzed, invariably resolve themselves into one essential element,—self. The men who have truly beatified mankind have done so unconsciously or inevitably, by an inborn divine energy of nature, and oftenest they are never identified with their deeds. It is not the inventor or proprietor of the best sauce, or telegraph, or government, that deserves the gratitude of his fellows, but he who shows us how unimportant are these things to the real greatness and peace of life. The test of a man is not whether he can govern a kingdom single-handed, but whether his private life is tender and beneficent, and his wife and children happy. If I could write my name in stars across the heavens I should be put to shame by the man whose home brightens whenever he enters it, and whose true name is known only to his wife, for she invented it when they were young lovers.

Seth Drayton had made more than one will during his lifetime, but after his death no will was found. He left no descendants, and his enormous fortune was therefore claimed by an indeterminate number of real or supposititious relatives; and the lawsuits thereupon arising will only come to an end when there are no millions left to fight about.

The Independent candidate was not elected; for

the report that one of his rivals was suffering from an incurable disease turned out the next day to be totally without foundation ; and events followed their natural course. The surviving members of the "Pactolus" syndicate, who, for some reason never fully explained, had anticipated a large share of patronage under the new administration, were consequently thrown into dismay and confusion, and their attempts to rehabilitate themselves were only partially successful. But, since the pleasure of the chase is in the pursuit and not in the capture, there is every prospect that none of these able gentlemen will ever lack enjoyment. Tom Peekskill, however, has had genuine good luck ; for he has become the proprietor of a superb new hotel, just erected in the upper part of the city, and is already reputed to be enormously rich. His face is hideously disfigured by an unfortunate accident ; but he is a mine of good stories and good-fellowship ; and, as to his social repute, he is on intimate terms with Judge Muhlbach, and other persons of almost as eminent respectability.

Susan Wayne's "Home" turned out to be popular in a rather unexpected sense. When its character and scope became known it had many more applicants than it was possible to accommodate ; not

so much owing to an increase of wickedness in the class which it aimed to benefit as to the difficulty of determining who did belong to that class and who did not, — a delicate question under the most favorable conditions, but especially so in a republic. Susan had trouble enough even while Nell Anthony remained to assist her, but when she was left (as ultimately happened) to her own devices she became hopelessly bewildered, and at length sold out the establishment to the proprietor of a private high-class school for young ladies. Susan has since then become interested in the recent development among us of art-needlework, and is the cause of a great deal of good work being done in that direction.

As to Warren Bell, though it was at one time rumored that there was some likelihood of his taking part in political life, nothing confirmatory of the rumor has ever come to light. The best I can say of him is, that I do not know what has become of him, but that, be he where he may, there is reason to believe that she whom we have known as Nell Anthony is with him. Yet, even in the light of her presence, there will always be a shadow on his heart.

